THE USE AND ABUSE OF HISTORY.

PREFACE.

"I HATE EVERYTHING that merely instructs me without increasing or directly quickening my activity." These words of Goethe, like a sincere *ceterum censeo*, may well stand at the head of my thoughts on the worth and the worthlessness of history. I will show in them why instruction that does not "quicken," knowledge that slackens the rein of activity, why in fact history, in Goethe's phrase, must be seriously "hated," as a costly and superfluous luxury of the understanding: for we are still in want of the necessaries of life, and the superfluous is an enemy to the necessary. We do need history, but quite differently from the jaded idlers in the garden of knowledge, however grandly they may look down on our rude and unpicturesque requirements. In other words, we need it for life and action, not as a convenient way to avoid life and action, or to excuse a selfish life and a cowardly or base action. We would serve history only so far as it serves life; but to value its study beyond a certain point mutilates and degrades life: and this is a fact that certain marked symptoms of our time make it as necessary as it may be painful to bring to the test of experience.

I have tried to describe a feeling that has often troubled me: I revenge myself on it by giving it publicity. This may lead some one to explain to me that he has also had the feeling, but that I do not feel it purely and elementally enough, and cannot express it with the ripe certainty of experience. A few may say so; but most people will tell me that it is a perverted, unnatural, horrible, and altogether unlawful feeling to have, and that I show myself unworthy of the great historical movement which is especially strong among the German people for the last two generations.

I am at all costs going to venture on a description of my feelings; which will be decidedly in the interests of propriety, as I shall give plenty of opportunity for paying compliments to such a "movement." And I gain an advantage for myself

that is more valuable to me than propriety — the attainment of a correct point of view, through my critics, with regard to our age.

These thoughts are “out of season,” because I am trying to represent something of which the age is rightly proud — its historical culture — as a fault and a defect in our time, believing as I do that we are all suffering from a malignant historical fever and should at least recognise the fact. But even if it be a virtue, Goethe may be right in asserting that we cannot help developing our faults at the same time as our virtues; and an excess of virtue can obviously bring a nation to ruin, as well as an excess of vice. In any case I may be allowed my say. But I will first relieve my mind by the confession that the experiences which produced those disturbing feelings were mostly drawn from myself, — and from other sources only for the sake of comparison; and that I have only reached such “unseasonable” experience, so far as I am the nursling of older ages like the Greek, and less a child of this age. I must admit so much in virtue of my profession as a classical scholar: for I do not know what meaning classical scholarship may have for our time except in its being “unseasonable,” — that is, contrary to our time, and yet with an influence on it for the benefit, it may be hoped, of a future time.

I.

Consider the herds that are feeding yonder: they know not the meaning of yesterday or to-day, they graze and ruminate, move or rest, from morning to night, from day to day, taken up with their little loves and hates, at the mercy of the moment, feeling neither melancholy nor satiety. Man cannot see them without regret, for even in the pride of his humanity he looks enviously on the beast’s happiness. He wishes simply to live without satiety or pain, like the beast; yet it is all in vain, for he will not change places with it. He may ask the beast— “Why do you look at me and not speak to me of your happiness?” The beast wants to answer— “Because I always forget what I wished to say”: but he forgets this answer too, and is silent; and the man is left to wonder.

He wonders also about himself, that he cannot learn to forget, but hangs on the past: however far or fast he run, that chain runs with him. It is matter for wonder: the moment, that is here and gone, that was nothing before and nothing after, returns like a spectre to trouble the quiet of a later moment. A leaf is continually dropping out of the volume of time and fluttering away — and suddenly it flutters back into the man's lap. Then he says, "I remember...," and envies the beast, that forgets at once, and sees every moment really die, sink into night and mist, extinguished for ever. The beast lives *unhistorically*; for it "goes into" the present, like a number, without leaving any curious remainder. It cannot dissimulate, it conceals nothing; at every moment it seems what it actually is, and thus can be nothing that is not honest. But man is always resisting the great and continually increasing weight of the past; it presses him down, and bows his shoulders; he travels with a dark invisible burden that he can plausibly disown, and is only too glad to disown in converse with his fellows — in order to excite their envy. And so it hurts him, like the thought of a lost Paradise, to see a herd grazing, or, nearer still, a child, that has nothing yet of the past to disown, and plays in a happy blindness between the walls of the past and the future. And yet its play must be disturbed, and only too soon will it be summoned from its little kingdom of oblivion. Then it learns to understand the words "once upon a time," the "open sesame" that lets in battle, suffering and weariness on mankind, and reminds them what their existence really is, an imperfect tense that never becomes a present. And when death brings at last the desired forgetfulness, it abolishes life and being together, and sets the seal on the knowledge that "being" is merely a continual "has been," a thing that lives by denying and destroying and contradicting itself.

If happiness and the chase for new happiness keep alive in any sense the will to live, no philosophy has perhaps more truth than the cynic's: for the beast's happiness, like that of the perfect cynic, is the visible proof of the truth of cynicism. The smallest pleasure, if it be only continuous and make one happy, is incomparably a greater happiness than the more intense pleasure that comes as an episode, a wild freak, a mad interval between ennui, desire, and privation. But in

the smallest and greatest happiness there is always one thing that makes it happiness: the power of forgetting, or, in more learned phrase, the capacity of feeling “unhistorically” throughout its duration. One who cannot leave himself behind on the threshold of the moment and forget the past, who cannot stand on a single point, like a goddess of victory, without fear or giddiness, will never know what happiness is; and, worse still, will never do anything to make others happy. The extreme case would be the man without any power to forget, who is condemned to see “becoming” everywhere. Such a man believes no more in himself or his own existence, he sees everything fly past in an eternal succession, and loses himself in the stream of becoming. At last, like the logical disciple of Heraclitus, he will hardly dare to raise his finger. Forgetfulness is a property of all action; just as not only light but darkness is bound up with the life of every organism. One who wished to feel everything historically, would be like a man forcing himself to refrain from sleep, or a beast who had to live by chewing a continual cud. Thus even a happy life is possible without remembrance, as the beast shows: but life in any true sense is absolutely impossible without forgetfulness. Or, to put my conclusion better, there is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of “historical sense,” that injures and finally destroys the living thing, be it a man or a people or a system of culture.

To fix this degree and the limits to the memory of the past, if it is not to become the gravedigger of the present, we must see clearly how great is the “plastic power” of a man or a community or a culture; I mean the power of specifically growing out of one’s self, of making the past and the strange one body with the near and the present, of healing wounds, replacing what is lost, repairing broken moulds. There are men who have this power so slightly that a single sharp experience, a single pain, often a little injustice, will lacerate their souls like the scratch of a poisoned knife. There are others, who are so little injured by the worst misfortunes, and even by their own spiteful actions, as to feel tolerably comfortable, with a fairly quiet conscience, in the midst of them, — or at any rate shortly afterwards. The deeper the roots of a man’s inner nature, the

better will he take the past into himself; and the greatest and most powerful nature would be known by the absence of limits for the historical sense to overgrow and work harm. It would assimilate and digest the past, however foreign, and turn it to sap. Such a nature can forget what it cannot subdue; there is no break in the horizon, and nothing to remind it that there are still men, passions, theories and aims on the other side. This is a universal law; a living thing can only be healthy, strong and productive within a certain horizon: if it be incapable of drawing one round itself, or too selfish to lose its own view in another's, it will come to an untimely end. Cheerfulness, a good conscience, belief in the future, the joyful deed, all depend, in the individual as well as the nation, on there being a line that divides the visible and clear from the vague and shadowy: we must know the right time to forget as well as the right time to remember; and instinctively see when it is necessary to feel historically, and when unhistorically. This is the point that the reader is asked to consider; that the unhistorical and the historical are equally necessary to the health of an individual, a community, and a system of culture.

Every one has noticed that a man's historical knowledge and range of feeling may be very limited, his horizon as narrow as that of an Alpine valley, his judgments incorrect and his experience falsely supposed original, and yet in spite of all the incorrectness and falsity he may stand forth in unconquerable health and vigour, to the joy of all who see him; whereas another man with far more judgment and learning will fail in comparison, because the lines of his horizon are continually changing and shifting, and he cannot shake himself free from the delicate network of his truth and righteousness for a downright act of will or desire. We saw that the beast, absolutely "unhistorical," with the narrowest of horizons, has yet a certain happiness, and lives at least without hypocrisy or ennui; and so we may hold the capacity of feeling (to a certain extent) unhistorically, to be the more important and elemental, as providing the foundation of every sound and real growth, everything that is truly great and human. The unhistorical is like the surrounding atmosphere that can alone create life, and in whose annihilation life itself disappears. It is true that man can only

become man by first suppressing this unhistorical element in his thoughts, comparisons, distinctions, and conclusions, letting a clear sudden light break through these misty clouds by his power of turning the past to the uses of the present. But an excess of history makes him flag again, while without the veil of the unhistorical he would never have the courage to begin. What deeds could man ever have done if he had not been enveloped in the dust-cloud of the unhistorical? Or, to leave metaphors and take a concrete example, imagine a man swayed and driven by a strong passion, whether for a woman or a theory. His world is quite altered. He is blind to everything behind him, new sounds are muffled and meaningless; though his perceptions were never so intimately felt in all their colour, light and music, and he Seems to grasp them with his five senses together. All his judgments of value are changed for the worse; there is much he can no longer value, as he can scarcely feel it: he wonders that he has so long been the sport of strange words and opinions, that his recollections have run around in one unwearying circle and are yet too weak and weary to make a single step away from it. His whole case is most indefensible; it is narrow, ungrateful to the past, blind to danger, deaf to warnings, a small living eddy in a dead sea of night and forgetfulness. And yet this condition, unhistorical and antihistorical throughout, is the cradle not only of unjust action, but of every just and justifiable action in the world. No artist will paint his picture, no general win his victory, no nation gain its freedom, without having striven and yearned for it under those very "unhistorical" conditions. If the man of action, in Goethe's phrase, is without conscience, he is also without knowledge: he forgets most things in order to do one, he is unjust to what is behind him, and only recognises one law, the law of that which is to be. So he loves his work infinitely more than it deserves to be loved; and the best works are produced in such an ecstasy of love that they must always be unworthy of it, however great their worth otherwise.

Should any one be able to dissolve the unhistorical atmosphere in which every great event happens, and breathe afterwards, he might be capable of rising to the "super-historical" standpoint of consciousness, that Niebuhr has described as the

possible result of historical research. “History,” he says, “is useful for one purpose, if studied in detail: that men may know, as the greatest and best spirits of our generation do not know, the accidental nature of the forms in which they see and insist on others seeing, — insist, I say, because their consciousness of them is exceptionally intense. Any one who has not grasped this idea in its different applications will fall under the spell of a more powerful spirit who reads a deeper emotion into the given form.” Such a standpoint might be called “super-historical,” as one who took it could feel no impulse from history to any further life or work, for he would have recognised the blindness and injustice in the soul of the doer as a condition of every deed: he would be cured henceforth of taking history too seriously, and have learnt to answer the question how and why life should be lived, — for all men and all circumstances, Greeks or Turks, the first century or the nineteenth. Whoever asks his friends whether they would live the last ten or twenty years over again, will easily see which of them is born for the “super-historical standpoint”: they will all answer no, but will give different reasons for their answer. Some will say they have the consolation that the next twenty will be better: they are the men referred to satirically by David Hume: —

“And from the dregs of life hope to receive,
What the first sprightly running could not give.”

We will call them the “historical men.” Their vision of the past turns them towards the future, encourages them to persevere with life, and kindles the hope that justice will yet come and happiness is behind the mountain they are climbing. They believe that the meaning of existence will become ever clearer in the course of its evolution, they only look backward at the process to understand the present and stimulate their longing for the future. They do not know how unhistorical their thoughts and actions are in spite of all their history, and how their preoccupation with it is for the sake of life rather than mere science.

But that question to which we have heard the first answer, is capable of another; also a "no," but on different grounds. It is the "no" of the "super-historical" man who sees no salvation in evolution, for whom the world is complete and fulfils its aim in every single moment. How could the next ten years teach what the past ten were not able to teach?

Whether the aim of the teaching be happiness or resignation, virtue or penance, these super-historical men are not agreed; but as against all merely historical ways of viewing the past, they are unanimous in the theory that the past and the present are one and the same, typically alike in all their diversity, and forming together a picture of eternally present imperishable types of unchangeable value and significance. Just as the hundreds of different languages correspond to the same constant and elemental needs of mankind, and one who understood the needs could learn nothing new from the languages; so the "super-historical" philosopher sees all the history of nations and individuals from within. He has a divine insight into the original meaning of the hieroglyphs, and comes even to be weary of the letters that are continually unrolled before him. How should the endless rush of events not bring satiety, surfeit, loathing? So the boldest of us is ready perhaps at last to say from his heart with Giacomo Leopardi: "Nothing lives that were worth thy pains, and the earth deserves not a sigh. Our being is pain and weariness, and the world is mud — nothing else. Be calm."

But we will leave the super-historical men to their loathings and their wisdom: we wish rather to-day to be joyful in our unwisdom and have a pleasant life as active men who go forward, and respect the course of the world. The value we put on the historical may be merely a Western prejudice: let us at least go forward within this prejudice and not stand still. If we could only learn better to study history as a means to life! We would gladly grant the super-historical people their superior wisdom, so long as we are sure of having more life than they: for in that case our unwisdom would have a greater future before it than their wisdom. To make my opposition between life and wisdom clear, I will take the usual road of the short summary.

A historical phenomenon, completely understood and reduced to an item of knowledge, is, in relation to the man who knows it, dead: for he has found out its madness, its injustice, its blind passion, and especially the earthly and darkened horizon that was the source of its power for history. This power has now become, for him who has recognised it, powerless; not yet, perhaps, for him who is alive.

History regarded as pure knowledge and allowed to sway the intellect would mean for men the final balancing of the ledger of life. Historical study is only fruitful for the future if it follow a powerful life-giving influence, for example, a new system of culture; only, therefore, if it be guided and dominated by a higher force, and do not itself guide and dominate.

History, so far as it serves life, serves an unhistorical power, and thus will never become a pure science like mathematics. The question how far life needs such a service is one of the most serious questions affecting the well-being of a man, a people and a culture. For by excess of history life becomes maimed and degenerate, and is followed by the degeneration of history as well.

II.

The fact that life does need the service of history must be as clearly grasped as that an excess of history hurts it; this will be proved later. History is necessary to the living man in three ways: in relation to his action and struggle, his conservatism and reverence, his suffering and his desire for deliverance. These three relations answer to the three kinds of history — so far as they can be distinguished — the *monumental*, the *antiquarian*, and the *critical*.

History is necessary above all to the man of action and power who fights a great fight and needs examples, teachers and comforters; he cannot find them among his contemporaries. It was necessary in this sense to Schiller; for our time is so evil, Goethe says, that the poet meets no nature that will profit him, among living men. Polybius is thinking of the active man when he calls political history the true preparation for governing a state; it is the great teacher, that shows us

how to bear steadfastly the reverses of fortune, by reminding us of what others have suffered. Whoever has learned to recognise this meaning in history must hate to see curious tourists and laborious beetle-hunters climbing up the great pyramids of antiquity. He does not wish to meet the idler who is rushing through the picture-galleries of the past for a new distraction or sensation, where he himself is looking for example and encouragement. To avoid being troubled by the weak and hopeless idlers, and those whose apparent activity is merely neurotic, he looks behind him and stays his course towards the goal in order to breathe. His goal is happiness, not perhaps his own, but often the nation's, or humanity's at large: he avoids quietism, and uses history as a weapon against it. For the most part he has no hope of reward except fame, which means the expectation of a niche in the temple of history, where he in his turn may be the consoler and counsellor of posterity. For his orders are that what has once been able to extend the conception "man" and give it a fairer content, must ever exist for the same office. The great moments in the individual battle form a chain, a high road for humanity through the ages, and the highest points of those vanished moments are yet great and living for men; and this is the fundamental idea of the belief in humanity, that finds a voice in the demand for a "monumental" history.

But the fiercest battle is fought round the demand for greatness to be eternal. Every other living thing cries no. "Away with the monuments," is the watch-word. Dull custom fills all the chambers of the world with its meanness, and rises in thick vapour round anything that is great, barring its way to immortality, blinding and stifling it. And the way passes through mortal brains! Through the brains of sick and short-lived beasts that ever rise to the surface to breathe, and painfully keep off annihilation for a little space. For they wish but one thing: to live at any cost. Who would ever dream of any "monumental history" among them, the hard torch-race that alone gives life to greatness? And yet there are always men awakening, who are strengthened and made happy by gazing on past greatness, as though man's life were a lordly thing, and the fairest fruit of this bitter tree were the knowledge that there was once a man who walked sternly and

proudly through this world, another who had pity and loving-kindness, another who lived in contemplation, — but all leaving one truth behind them, that his life is the fairest who thinks least about life. The common man snatches greedily at this little span, with tragic earnestness, but they, on their way to monumental history and immortality, knew how to greet it with Olympic laughter, or at least with a lofty scorn; and they went down to their graves in irony — for what had they to bury? Only what they had always treated as dross, refuse, and vanity, and which now falls into its true home of oblivion, after being so long the sport of their contempt. One thing will live, the sign-manual of their inmost being, the rare flash of light, the deed, the creation; because posterity cannot do without it. In this spiritualised form fame is something more than the sweetest morsel for our egoism, in Schopenhauer's phrase: it is the belief in the oneness and continuity of the great in every age, and a protest against the change and decay of generations.

What is the use to the modern man of this "monumental" contemplation of the past, this preoccupation with the rare and classic? It is the knowledge that the great thing existed and was therefore possible, and so may be possible again. He is heartened on his way; for his doubt in weaker moments, whether his desire be not for the impossible, is struck aside. Suppose one believe that no more than a hundred men, brought up in the new spirit, efficient and productive, were needed to give the deathblow to the present fashion of education in Germany; he will gather strength from the remembrance that the culture of the Renaissance was raised on the shoulders of such another band of a hundred men.

And yet if we really wish to learn something from an example, how vague and elusive do we find the comparison! If it is to give us strength, many of the differences must be neglected, the individuality of the past forced into a general formula and all the sharp angles broken off for the sake of correspondence. Ultimately, of course, what was once possible can only become possible a second time on the Pythagorean theory, that when the heavenly bodies are in the same position again, the events on earth are reproduced to the smallest detail; so when the stars have a certain relation, a Stoic and an Epicurean will form a conspiracy

to murder Cæsar, and a different conjunction will show another Columbus discovering America. Only if the earth always began its drama again after the fifth act, and it were certain that the same interaction of motives, the same *deus ex machina*, the same catastrophe would occur at particular intervals, could the man of action venture to look for the whole archetypic truth in monumental history, to see each fact fully set out in its uniqueness: it would not probably be before the astronomers became astrologers again. Till then monumental history will never be able to have complete truth; it will always bring together things that are incompatible and generalise them into compatibility, will always weaken the differences of motive and occasion. Its object is to depict effects at the expense of the causes— "monumentally," that is, as examples for imitation: it turns aside, as far as it may, from reasons, and might be called with far less exaggeration a collection of "effects in themselves," than of events that will have an effect on all ages. The events of war or religion cherished in our popular celebrations are such "effects in themselves"; it is these that will not let ambition sleep, and lie like amulets on the bolder hearts — not the real historical nexus of cause and effect, which, rightly understood, would only prove that nothing quite similar could ever be cast again from the dice-boxes of fate and the future.

As long as the soul of history is found in the great impulse that it gives to a powerful spirit, as long as the past is principally used as a model for imitation, it is always in danger of being a little altered and touched up, and brought nearer to fiction. Sometimes there is no possible distinction between a "monumental" past and a mythical romance, as the same motives for action can be gathered from the one world as the other. If this monumental method of surveying the past dominate the others, — the antiquarian and the critical, — the past itself suffers wrong. Whole tracts of it are forgotten and despised; they flow away like a dark unbroken river, with only a few gaily coloured islands of fact rising above it. There is something beyond nature in the rare figures that become visible, like the golden hips that his disciples attributed to Pythagoras. Monumental history lives by false analogy; it entices the brave to rashness, and the enthusiastic to fanaticism by its

tempting comparisons. Imagine this history in the hands — and the head — of a gifted egoist or an inspired scoundrel; kingdoms will be overthrown, princes murdered, war and revolution let loose, and the number of "effects in themselves" — in other words, effects without sufficient cause — increased. So much for the harm done by monumental history to the powerful men of action, be they good or bad; but what if the weak and the inactive take it as their servant — or their master!

Consider the simplest and commonest example, the inartistic or half artistic natures whom a monumental history provides with sword and buckler. They will use the weapons against their hereditary enemies, the great artistic spirits, who alone can learn from that history the one real lesson, how to live, and embody what they have learnt in noble action. Their way is obstructed, their free air darkened by the idolatrous — and conscientious — dance round the half understood monument of a great past. "See, that is the true and real art," we seem to hear: "of what use are these aspiring little people of to-day?" The dancing crowd has apparently the monopoly of "good taste": for the creator is always at a disadvantage compared with the mere looker-on, who never put a hand to the work; just as the arm-chair politician has ever had more wisdom and foresight than the actual statesman. But if the custom of democratic suffrage and numerical majorities be transferred to the realm of art, and the artist put on his defence before the court of æsthetic dilettanti, you may take your oath on his condemnation; although, or rather because, his judges had proclaimed solemnly the canon of "monumental art," the art that has "had an effect on all ages," according to the official definition. In their eyes no need nor inclination nor historical authority is in favour of the art which is not yet "monumental" because it is contemporary. Their instinct tells them that art can be slain by art: the monumental will never be reproduced, and the weight of its authority is invoked from the past to make it sure. They are connoisseurs of art, primarily because they wish to kill art; they pretend to be physicians, when their real idea is to dabble in poisons. They develop their tastes to a point of perversion, that they may be able

to show a reason for continually rejecting all the nourishing artistic fare that is offered them. For they do not want greatness, to arise: their method is to say, “See, the great thing is already here!” In reality they care as little about the great thing that is already here, as that which is about to arise: their lives are evidence of that. Monumental history is the cloak under which their hatred of present power and greatness masquerades as an extreme admiration of the past: the real meaning of this way of viewing history is disguised as its opposite; whether they wish it or no, they are acting as though their motto were, “let the dead bury the — living.”

Each of the three kinds of history will only flourish in one ground and climate: otherwise it grows to a noxious weed. If the man who will produce something great, have need of the past, he makes himself its master by means of monumental history: the man who can rest content with the traditional and venerable, uses the past as an “antiquarian historian”: and only he whose heart is oppressed by an instant need, and who will cast the burden off at any price, feels the want of “critical history,” the history that judges and condemns. There is much harm wrought by wrong and thoughtless planting: the critic without the need, the antiquary without piety, the knower of the great deed who cannot be the doer of it, are plants that have grown to weeds, they are torn from their native soil and therefore degenerate.

III.

Secondly, history is necessary to the man of conservative and reverent nature, who looks back to the origins of his existence with love and trust; through it, he gives thanks for life. He is careful to preserve what survives from ancient days, and will reproduce the conditions of his own upbringing for those who come after him; thus he does life a service. The possession of his ancestors’ furniture changes its meaning in his soul: for his soul is rather possessed by it. All that is small and limited, mouldy and obsolete, gains a worth and inviolability of its own from the

conservative and reverent soul of the antiquary migrating into it, and building a secret nest there. The history of his town becomes the history of himself; he looks on the walls, the turreted gate, the town council, the fair, as an illustrated diary of his youth, and sees himself in it all — his strength, industry, desire, reason, faults and follies. “Here one could live,” he says, “as one can live here now — and will go on living; for we are tough folk, and will not be uprooted in the night.” And so, with his “we,” he surveys the marvellous individual life of the past and identifies himself with the spirit of the house, the family and the city. He greets the soul of his people from afar as his own, across the dim and troubled centuries: his gifts and his virtues lie in such power of feeling and divination, his scent of a half-vanished trail, his instinctive correctness in reading the scribbled past, and understanding at once its palimpsests — nay, its polypsests. Goethe stood with such thoughts before the monument of Erwin von Steinbach: the storm of his feeling rent the historical cloud-veil that hung between them, and he saw the German work for the first time “coming from the stern, rough, German soul.” This was the road that the Italians of the Renaissance travelled, the spirit that reawakened the ancient Italic genius in their poets to “a wondrous echo of the immemorial lyre,” as Jacob Burckhardt says. But the greatest value of this antiquarian spirit of reverence lies in the simple emotions of pleasure and content that it lends to the drab, rough, even painful circumstances of a nation’s or individual’s life: Niebuhr confesses that he could live happily on a moor among free peasants with a history, and would never feel the want of art. How could history serve life better than by anchoring the less gifted races and peoples to the homes and customs of their ancestors, and keeping them from ranging far afield in search of better, to find only struggle and competition? The influence that ties men down to the same companions and circumstances, to the daily round of toil, to their bare mountain-side, — seems to be selfish and unreasonable: but it is a healthy unreason and of profit to the community; as every one knows who has clearly realised the terrible consequences of mere desire for migration and adventure, — perhaps in whole peoples, — or who watches the destiny of a

nation that has lost confidence in its earlier days, and is given up to a restless cosmopolitanism and an unceasing desire for novelty. The feeling of the tree that clings to its roots, the happiness of knowing one's growth to be one not merely arbitrary and fortuitous, but the inheritance, the fruit and blossom of a past, that does not merely justify but crown the present — this is what we nowadays prefer to call the real historical sense.

These are not the conditions most favourable to reducing the past to pure science: and we see here too, as we saw in the case of monumental history, that the past itself suffers when history serves life and is directed by its end. To vary the metaphor, the tree feels its roots better than it can see them: the greatness of the feeling is measured by the greatness and strength of the visible branches. The tree may be wrong here; how far more wrong will it be in regard to the whole forest, which it only knows and feels so far as it is hindered or helped by it, and not otherwise! The antiquarian sense of a man, a city or a nation has always a very limited field. Many things are not noticed at all; the others are seen in isolation, as through a microscope. There is no measure: equal importance is given to everything, and therefore too much to anything. For the things of the past are never viewed in their true perspective or receive their just value; but value and perspective change with the individual or the nation that is looking back on its past.

There is always the danger here, that everything ancient will be regarded as equally venerable, and everything without this respect for antiquity, like a new spirit, rejected as an enemy. The Greeks themselves admitted the archaic style of plastic art by the side of the freer and greater style; and later, did not merely tolerate the pointed nose and the cold mouth, but made them even a canon of taste. If the judgment of a people harden in this way, and history's service to the past life be to undermine a further and higher life; if the historical sense no longer preserve life, but mummify it: then the tree dies, unnaturally, from the top downwards, and at last the roots themselves wither. Antiquarian history degenerates from the moment that it no longer gives a soul and inspiration to the

fresh life of the present. The spring of piety is dried up, but the learned habit persists without it and revolves complaisantly round its own centre. The horrid spectacle is seen of the mad collector raking over all the dust-heaps of the past. He breathes a mouldy air; the antiquarian habit may degrade a considerable talent, a real spiritual need in him, to a mere insatiable curiosity for everything old: he often sinks so low as to be satisfied with any food, and greedily devour all the scraps that fall from the bibliographical table.

Even if this degeneration do not take place, and the foundation be not withered on which antiquarian history can alone take root with profit to life: yet there are dangers enough, if it become too powerful and invade the territories of the other methods. It only understands how to preserve life, not to create it; and thus always undervalues the present growth, having, unlike monumental history, no certain instinct for it. Thus it hinders the mighty impulse to a new deed and paralyses the doer, who must always, as doer, be grazing some piety or other. The fact that has grown old carries with it a demand for its own immortality. For when one considers the life-history of such an ancient fact, the amount of reverence paid to it for generations — whether it be a custom, a religious creed, or a political principle, — it seems presumptuous, even impious, to replace it by a new fact, and the ancient congregation of pieties by a new piety.

Here we see clearly how necessary a third way of looking at the past is to man, beside the other two. This is the “critical” way; which is also in the service of life. Man must have the strength to break up the past; and apply it too, in order to live. He must bring the past to the bar of judgment, interrogate it remorselessly, and finally condemn it. Every past is worth condemning: this is the rule in mortal affairs, which always contain a large measure of human power and human weakness. It is not justice that sits in judgment here; nor mercy that proclaims the verdict; but only life, the dim, driving force that insatiably desires — itself. Its sentence is always unmerciful, always unjust, as it never flows from a pure fountain of knowledge: though it would generally turn out the same, if Justice herself delivered it. “For everything that is born is *worthy* of being destroyed:

better were it then that nothing should be born." It requires great strength to be able to live and forget how far life and injustice are one. Luther himself once said that the world only arose by an oversight of God; if he had ever dreamed of heavy ordnance, he would never have created it. The same life that needs forgetfulness, needs sometimes its destruction; for should the injustice of something ever become obvious — a monopoly, a caste, a dynasty for example — the thing deserves to fall. Its past is critically examined, the knife put to its roots, and all the "pieties" are grimly trodden under foot. The process is always dangerous, even for life; and the men or the times that serve life in this way, by judging and annihilating the past, are always dangerous to themselves and others. For as we are merely the resultant of previous generations, we are also the resultant of their errors, passions, and crimes: it is impossible to shake off this chain. Though we condemn the errors and think we have escaped them, we cannot escape the fact that we spring from them. At best, it comes to a conflict between our innate, inherited nature and our knowledge, between a stern, new discipline and an ancient tradition; and we plant a new way of life, a new instinct, a second nature, that withers the first. It is an attempt to gain a past *a posteriori* from which we might spring, as against that from which we do spring; always a dangerous attempt, as it is difficult to find a limit to the denial of the past, and the second natures are generally weaker than the first. We stop too often at knowing the good without doing it, because we also know the better but cannot do it. Here and there the victory is won, which gives a strange consolation to the fighters, to those who use critical history for the sake of life. The consolation is the knowledge that this "first nature" was once a second, and that every conquering "second nature" becomes a first.

IV.

This is how history can serve life. Every man and nation needs a certain knowledge of the past, whether it be through monumental, antiquarian, or critical

history, according to his objects, powers, and necessities. The need is not that of the mere thinkers who only look on at life, or the few who desire knowledge and can only be satisfied with knowledge; but it has always a reference to the end of life, and is under its absolute rule and direction. This is the natural relation of an age, a culture and a people to history; hunger is its source, necessity its norm, the inner plastic power assigns its limits. The knowledge of the past is only desired for the service of the future and the present, not to weaken the present or undermine a living future. All this is as simple as truth itself, and quite convincing to any one who is not in the toils of "historical deduction."

And now to take a quick glance at our time! We fly back in astonishment. The clearness, naturalness, and purity of the connection between life and history has vanished; and in what a maze of exaggeration and contradiction do we now see the problem! Is the guilt ours who see it, or have life and history really altered their conjunction and an inauspicious star risen between them? Others may prove we have seen falsely; I am merely saying what we believe we see. There is such a star, a bright and lordly star, and the conjunction is really altered — by science, and the demand for history to be a science. Life is no more dominant, and knowledge of the past no longer its thrall: boundary marks are overthrown everything bursts its limits. The perspective of events is blurred, and the blur extends through their whole immeasurable course. No generation has seen such a panoramic comedy as is shown by the "science of universal evolution," history; that shows it with the dangerous audacity of its motto— "Fiat veritas, pereat vita."

Let me give a picture of the spiritual events in the soul of the modern man. Historical knowledge streams on him from sources that are inexhaustible, strange incoherencies come together, memory opens all its gates and yet is never open wide enough, nature busies herself to receive all the foreign guests, to honour them and put them in their places. But they are at war with each other: violent measures seem necessary, in order to escape destruction one's self. It becomes second nature to grow gradually accustomed to this irregular and stormy home-

life, though this second nature is unquestionably weaker, more restless, more radically unsound than the first. The modern man carries inside him an enormous heap of indigestible knowledge-stones that occasionally rattle together in his body, as the fairy-tale has it. And the rattle reveals the most striking characteristic of these modern men, the opposition of something inside them to which nothing external corresponds; and the reverse. The ancient nations knew nothing of this. Knowledge, taken in excess without hunger, even contrary to desire, has no more the effect of transforming the external life; and remains hidden in a chaotic inner world that the modern man has a curious pride in calling his "real personality." He has the substance, he says, and only wants the form; but this is quite an unreal opposition in a living thing. Our modern culture is for that reason not a living one, because it cannot be understood without that opposition. In other words, it is not a real culture but a kind of knowledge about culture, a complex of various thoughts and feelings about it, from which no decision as to its direction can come. Its real motive force that issues in visible action is often no more than a mere convention, a wretched imitation, or even a shameless caricature. The man probably feels like the snake that has swallowed a rabbit whole and lies still in the sun, avoiding all movement not absolutely necessary. The "inner life" is now the only thing that matters to education, and all who see it hope that the education may not fail by being too indigestible. Imagine a Greek meeting it; he would observe that for modern men "education" and "historical education" seem to mean the same thing, with the difference that the one phrase is longer. And if he spoke of his own theory, that a man can be very well educated without any history at all, people would shake their heads and think they had not heard aright. The Greeks, the famous people of a past still near to us, had the "unhistorical sense" strongly developed in the period of the greatest power. If a typical child of this age were transported to that world by some enchantment, he would probably find the Greeks very "uneducated." And that discovery would betray the closely guarded secret of modern culture to the laughter of the world. For we moderns have nothing of our own. We only become worth notice by filling ourselves to

overflowing with foreign customs, arts, philosophies, religions and sciences: we are wandering encyclopædias, as an ancient Greek who had strayed into our time would probably call us. But the only value of an encyclopædia lies in the inside, in the contents, not in what is written outside, in the binding or the wrapper. And so the whole of modern culture is essentially internal; the bookbinder prints something like this on the cover: "Manual of internal culture for external barbarians." The opposition of inner and outer makes the outer side still more barbarous, as it would naturally be, when the outward growth of a rude people merely developed its primitive inner needs. For what means has nature of repressing too great a luxuriance from without? Only one, — to be affected by it as little as possible, to set it aside and stamp it out at the first opportunity. And so we have the custom of no longer taking real things seriously, we get the feeble personality on which the real and the permanent make so little impression. Men become at last more careless and accommodating in external matters, and the considerable cleft between substance and form is widened; until they have no longer any feeling for barbarism, if only their memories be kept continually titillated, and there flow a constant stream of new things to be known, that can be neatly packed up in the cupboards of their memory. The culture of a people as against this barbarism, can be, I think, described with justice as the "unity of artistic style in every outward expression of the people's life." This must not be misunderstood, as though it were merely a question of the opposition between barbarism and "fine style." The people that can be called cultured, must be in a real sense a living unity, and not be miserably cleft asunder into form and substance. If one wish to promote a people's culture, let him try to promote this higher unity first, and work for the destruction of the modern educative system for the sake of a true education. Let him dare to consider how the health of a people that has been destroyed by history may be restored, and how it may recover its instincts with its honour.

I am only speaking, directly, about the Germans of the present day, who have had to suffer more than other people from the feebleness of personality and the

opposition of substance and form. “Form” generally implies for us some convention, disguise or hypocrisy, and if not hated, is at any rate not loved. We have an extraordinary fear of both the word convention and the thing. This fear drove the German from the French school; for he wished to become more natural, and therefore more German. But he seems to have come to a false conclusion with his “therefore.” First he ran away from his school of convention, and went by any road he liked: he has come ultimately to imitate voluntarily in a slovenly fashion, what he imitated painfully and often successfully before. So now the lazy fellow lives under French conventions that are actually incorrect: his manner of walking shows it, his conversation and dress, his general way of life. In the belief that he was returning to Nature, he merely followed caprice and comfort, with the smallest possible amount of self-control. Go through any German town; you will see conventions that are nothing but the negative aspect of the national characteristics of foreign states. Everything is colourless, worn out, shoddy and ill-copied. Every one acts at his own sweet will — which is not a strong or serious will — on laws dictated by the universal rush and the general desire for comfort. A dress that made no head ache in its inventing and wasted no time in the making, borrowed from foreign models and imperfectly copied, is regarded as an important contribution to German fashion. The sense of form is ironically disclaimed by the people — for they have the “sense of substance”: they are famous for their cult of “inwardness.”

But there is also a famous danger in their “inwardness”: the internal substance cannot be seen from the outside, and so may one day take the opportunity of vanishing, and no one notice its absence, any more than its presence before. One may think the German people to be very far from this danger: yet the foreigner will have some warrant for his reproach that our inward life is too weak and ill-organised to provide a form and external expression for itself. It may in rare cases show itself finely receptive, earnest and powerful, richer perhaps than the inward life of other peoples; but, taken as a whole, it remains weak, as all its fine threads are not tied together in one strong knot. The visible action is not the self-

manifestation of the inward life, but only a weak and crude attempt of a single thread to make a show of representing the whole. And thus the German is not to be judged on any one action, for the individual may be as completely obscure after it as before. He must obviously be measured by his thoughts and feelings, which are now expressed in his books; if only the books did not, more than ever, raise the doubt whether the famous inward life is still really sitting in its inaccessible shrine. It might one day vanish and leave behind it only the external life, — with its vulgar pride and vain servility, — to mark the German. Fearful thought! — as fearful as if the inward life still sat there, painted and rouged and disguised, become a play-actress or something worse; as his theatrical experience seems to have taught the quiet observer Grillparzer, standing aside as he did from the main press. “We feel by theory,” he says. “We hardly know any more how our contemporaries give expression to their feelings: we make them use gestures that are impossible nowadays. Shakespeare has spoilt us moderns.”

This is a single example, its general application perhaps too hastily assumed. But how terrible it would be were that generalisation justified before our eyes! There would be then a note of despair in the phrase, “We Germans feel by theory, we are all spoilt by history;” — a phrase that would cut at the roots of any hope for a future national culture. For every hope of that kind grows from the belief in the genuineness and immediacy of German feeling, from the belief in an untarnished inward life. Where is our hope or belief, when its spring is muddied, and the inward quality has learned gestures and dances and the use of cosmetics, has learned to express itself “with due reflection in abstract terms,” and gradually lose itself? And how should a great productive spirit exist among a nation that is not sure of its inward unity and is divided into educated men whose inner life has been drawn from the true path of education, and uneducated men whose inner life cannot be approached at all? How should it exist, I say, when the people has lost its own unity of feeling, and knows that the feeling of the part calling itself the educated part and claiming the right of controlling the artistic spirit of the nation, is false and hypocritical? Here and there the judgment and taste of individuals

may be higher and finer than the rest, but that is no compensation: it tortures a man to have to speak only to one section and be no longer in sympathy with his people. He would rather bury his treasure now, in disgust at the vulgar patronage of a class, though his heart be filled with tenderness for all. The instinct of the people can no longer meet him half-way; it is useless for them to stretch their arms out to him in yearning. What remains but to turn his quickened hatred against the ban, strike at the barrier raised by the so-called culture, and condemn as judge what blasted and degraded him as a living man and a source of life? He takes a profound insight into fate in exchange for the godlike desire of creation and help, and ends his days as a lonely philosopher, with the wisdom of disillusion. It is the painfullest comedy: he who sees it will feel a sacred obligation on him, and say to himself,— "Help must come: the higher unity in the nature and soul of a people must be brought back, the cleft between inner and outer must again disappear under the hammer of necessity." But to what means can he look? What remains to him now but his knowledge? He hopes to plant the feeling of a need, by speaking from the breadth of that knowledge, giving it freely with both hands. From the strong need the strong action may one day arise. And to leave no doubt of the instance I am taking of the need and the knowledge, my testimony shall stand, that it is German unity in its highest sense which is the goal of our endeavour, far more than political union: it is the unity of the German spirit and life after the annihilation of the antagonism between form and substance, inward life and convention.

V.

An excess of history seems to be an enemy to the life of a time, and dangerous in five ways. Firstly, the contrast of inner and outer is emphasised and personality weakened. Secondly, the time comes to imagine that it possesses the rarest of virtues, justice, to a higher degree than any other time. Thirdly, the instincts of a nation are thwarted, the maturity of the individual arrested no less than that of the

whole. Fourthly, we get the belief in the old age of mankind, the belief, at all times harmful, that we are late survivals, mere Epigoni. Lastly, an age reaches a dangerous condition of irony with regard to itself, and the still more dangerous state of cynicism, when a cunning egoistic theory of action is matured that maims and at last destroys the vital strength.

To return to the first point: the modern man suffers from a weakened personality. The Roman of the Empire ceased to be a Roman through the contemplation of the world that lay at his feet; he lost himself in the crowd of foreigners that streamed into Rome, and degenerated amid the cosmopolitan carnival of arts, worships and moralities. It is the same with the modern man, who is continually having a world-panorama unrolled before his eyes by his historical artists. He is turned into a restless, dilettante spectator, and arrives at a condition when even great wars and revolutions cannot affect him beyond the moment. The war is hardly at an end, and it is already converted into thousands of copies of printed matter, and will be soon served up as the latest means of tickling the jaded palates of the historical gourmets. It seems impossible for a strong full chord to be prolonged, however powerfully the strings are swept: it dies away again the next moment in the soft and strengthless echo of history. In ethical language, one never succeeds in staying on a height; your deeds are sudden crashes, and not a long roll of thunder. One may bring the greatest and most marvellous thing to perfection; it must yet go down to Orcus unhonoured and unsung. For art flies away when you are roofing your deeds with the historical awning. The man who wishes to understand everything in a moment, when he ought to grasp the unintelligible as the sublime by a long struggle, can be called intelligent only in the sense of Schiller’s epigram on the “reason of reasonable men.” There is something the child sees that he does not see; something the child hears that he does not hear; and this something is the most important thing of all. Because he does not understand it, his understanding is more childish than the child’s and more simple than simplicity itself; in spite of the many clever wrinkles on his parchment face, and the masterly play of his fingers in unravelling the knots. He has lost or

destroyed his instinct; he can no longer trust the “divine animal” and let the reins hang loose, when his understanding fails him and his way lies through the desert. His individuality is shaken, and left without any sure belief in itself; it sinks into its own inner being, which only means here the disordered chaos of what it has learned, which will never express itself externally, being mere dogma that cannot turn to life. Looking further, we see how the banishment of instinct by history has turned men to shades and abstractions: no one ventures to show a personality, but masks himself as a man of culture, a savant, poet or politician.

If one take hold of these masks, believing he has to do with a serious thing and not a mere puppet-show — for they all have an appearance of seriousness — he will find nothing but rags and coloured streamers in his hands. He must deceive himself no more, but cry aloud, “Off with your jackets, or be what you seem!” A man of the royal stock of seriousness must no longer be Don Quixote, for he has better things to do than to tilt at such pretended realities. But he must always keep a sharp look about him, call his “Halt! who goes there?” to all the shrouded figures, and tear the masks from their faces. And see the result! One might have thought that history encouraged men above all to be honest, even if it were only to be honest fools: this used to be its effect, but is so no longer. Historical education and the uniform frock-coat of the citizen are both dominant at the same time. While there has never been such a full-throated chatter about “free personality,” personalities can be seen no more (to say nothing of free ones); but merely men in uniform, with their coats anxiously pulled over their ears. Individuality has withdrawn itself to its recesses; it is seen no more from the outside, which makes one doubt if it be possible to have causes without effects. Or will a race of eunuchs prove to be necessary to guard the historical harem of the world? We can understand the reason for their aloofness very well. Does it not seem as if their task were to watch over history to see that nothing comes out except other histories, but no deed that might be historical; to prevent personalities becoming “free,” that is, sincere towards themselves and others, both in word and deed? Only through this sincerity will the inner need and misery of the modern man be

brought to the light, and art and religion come as true helpers in the place of that sad hypocrisy of convention and masquerade, to plant a common culture which will answer to real necessities, and not teach, as the present "liberal education" teaches, to tell lies about these needs, and thus become a walking lie one's self.

In such an age, that suffers from its "liberal education," how unnatural, artificial and unworthy will be the conditions under which the sincerest of all sciences, the holy naked goddess Philosophy, must exist! She remains, in such a world of compulsion and outward conformity, the subject of the deep monologue of the lonely wanderer or the chance prey of any hunter, the dark secret of the chamber or the daily talk of the old men and children at the university. No one dare fulfil the law of philosophy in himself; no one lives philosophically, with that single-hearted virile faith that forced one of the olden time to bear himself as a Stoic, wherever he was and whatever he did, if he had once sworn allegiance to the Stoa. All modern philosophising is political or official, bound down to be a mere phantasmagoria of learning by our modern governments, churches, universities, moralities and cowardices: it lives by sighing "if only...." and by knowing that "it happened once upon a time...." Philosophy has no place in historical education, if it will be more than the knowledge that lives indoors, and can have no expression in action. Were the modern man once courageous and determined, and not merely such an indoor being even in his hatreds, he would banish philosophy. At present he is satisfied with modestly covering her nakedness. Yes, men think, write, print, speak and teach philosophically: so much is permitted them. It is only otherwise in action, in "life." Only one thing is permitted there, and everything else quite impossible: such are the orders of historical education. "Are these human beings," one might ask, "or only machines for thinking, writing and speaking?"

Goethe says of Shakespeare: "No one has more despised correctness of costume than he: he knows too well the inner costume that all men wear alike. You hear that he describes Romans wonderfully; I do not think so: they are flesh-and-blood Englishmen; but at any rate they are men from top to toe, and the

Roman toga sits well on them." Would it be possible, I wonder, to represent our present literary and national heroes, officials and politicians as Romans? I am sure it would not, as they are no men, but incarnate compendia, abstractions made concrete. If they have a character of their own, it is so deeply sunk that it can never rise to the light of day: if they are men, they are only men to a physiologist. To all others they are something else, not men, not "beasts or gods," but historical pictures of the march of civilisation, and nothing but pictures and civilisation, form without any ascertainable substance, bad form unfortunately, and uniform at that. And in this way my thesis is to be understood and considered: "only strong personalities can endure history, the weak are extinguished by it." History unsettles the feelings when they are not powerful enough to measure the past by themselves. The man who dare no longer trust himself, but asks history against his will for advice "how he ought to feel now," is insensibly turned by his timidity into a play-actor, and plays a part, or generally many parts, — very badly therefore and superficially. Gradually all connection ceases between the man and his historical subjects. We see noisy little fellows measuring themselves with the Romans as though they were like them: they burrow in the remains of the Greek poets, as if these were *corpora* for their dissection — and as *vilia* as their own well-educated *corpora* might be. Suppose a man is working at Democritus. The question is always on my tongue, why precisely Democritus? Why not Heraclitus, or Philo, or Bacon, or Descartes? And then, why a philosopher? Why not a poet or orator? And why especially a Greek? Why not an Englishman or a Turk? Is not the past large enough to let you find some place where you may disport yourself without becoming ridiculous? But, as I said, they are a race of eunuchs: and to the eunuch one woman is the same as another, merely a woman, "woman in herself," the Ever-unapproachable. And it is indifferent what they study, if history itself always remain beautifully "objective" to them, as men, in fact, who could never make history themselves. And since the Eternal Feminine could never "draw you upward," you draw it down to you, and being neuter yourselves, regard history as neuter also. But in order that no one may take any comparison of history and the

Eternal Feminine too seriously, I will say at once that I hold it, on the contrary, to be the Eternal Masculine: I only add that for those who are “historically trained” throughout, it must be quite indifferent which it is; for they are themselves neither man nor woman, nor even hermaphrodite, but mere neuters, or, in more philosophic language, the Eternal Objective.

If the personality be once emptied of its subjectivity, and come to what men call an “objective” condition, nothing can have any more effect on it. Something good and true may be done, in action, poetry or music: but the hollow culture of the day will look beyond the work and ask the history of the author. If the author have already created something, our historian will set out clearly the past and the probable future course of his development, he will put him with others and compare them, and separate by analysis the choice of his material and his treatment; he will wisely sum the author up and give him general advice for his future path. The most astonishing works may be created; the swarm of historical neuters will always be in their place, ready to consider the authors through their long telescopes. The echo is heard at once: but always in the form of “criticism,” though the critic never dreamed of the work’s possibility a moment before. It never comes to have an influence, but only a criticism: and the criticism itself has no influence, but only breeds another criticism. And so we come to consider the fact of many critics as a mark of influence, that of few or none as a mark of failure. Actually everything remains in the old condition, even in the presence of such “influence”: men talk a little while of a new thing, and then of some other new thing, and in the meantime they do what they have always done. The historical training of our critics prevents their having an influence in the true sense, an influence on life and action. They put their blotting paper on the blackest writing, and their thick brushes over the gracefullest designs; these they call “corrections”; — and that is all. Their critical pens never cease to fly, for they have lost power over them; they are driven by their pens instead of driving them. The weakness of modern personality comes out well in the measureless overflow

of criticism, in the want of self-mastery, and in what the Romans called *impotentia*.

VI.

But leaving these weaklings, let us turn rather to a point of strength for which the modern man is famous. Let us ask the painful question whether he has the right in virtue of his historical "objectivity" to call himself strong and just in a higher degree than the man of another age. Is it true that this objectivity has its source in a heightened sense of the need for justice? Or, being really an effect of quite other causes, does it only have the appearance of coming from justice, and really lead to an unhealthy prejudice in favour of the modern man? Socrates thought it near madness to imagine one possessed a virtue without really possessing it. Such imagination has certainly more danger in it than the contrary madness of a positive vice. For of this there is still a cure; but the other makes a man or a time daily worse, and therefore more unjust.

No one has a higher claim to our reverence than the man with the feeling and the strength for justice. For the highest and rarest virtues unite and are lost in it, as an unfathomable sea absorbs the streams that flow from every side. The hand of the just man, who is called to sit in judgment, trembles no more when it holds the scales: he piles the weights inexorably against his own side, his eyes are not dimmed as the balance rises and falls, and his voice is neither hard nor broken when he pronounces the sentence. Were he a cold demon of knowledge, he would cast round him the icy atmosphere of an awful, superhuman majesty, that we should fear, not reverence. But he is a man, and has tried to rise from a careless doubt to a strong certainty, from gentle tolerance to the imperative "thou must"; from the rare virtue of magnanimity to the rarest, of justice. He has come to be like that demon without being more than a poor mortal at the outset; above all, he has to atone to himself for his humanity and tragically shatter his own nature on the rock of an impossible virtue. — All this places him on a lonely height as the

most reverend example of the human race. For truth is his aim, not in the form of cold intellectual knowledge, but the truth of the judge who punishes according to law; not as the selfish possession of an individual, but the sacred authority that removes the boundary stones from all selfish possessions; truth, in a word, as the tribunal of the world, and not as the chance prey of a single hunter. The search for truth is often thoughtlessly praised: but it only has anything great in it if the seeker have the sincere unconditional will for justice. Its roots are in justice alone: but a whole crowd of different motives may combine in the search for it, that have nothing to do with truth at all; curiosity, for example, or dread of ennui, envy, vanity, or amusement. Thus the world seems to be full of men who "serve truth": and yet the virtue of justice is seldom present, more seldom known, and almost always mortally hated. On the other hand a throng of sham virtues has entered in at all times with pomp and honour.

Few in truth serve truth, as only few have the pure will for justice; and very few even of these have the strength to be just. The will alone is not enough: the impulse to justice without the power of judgment has been the cause of the greatest suffering to men. And thus the common good could require nothing better than for the seed of this power to be strewn as widely as possible, that the fanatic may be distinguished from the true judge, and the blind desire from the conscious power. But there are no means of planting a power of judgment: and so when one speaks to men of truth and justice, they will be ever troubled by the doubt whether it be the fanatic or the judge who is speaking to them. And they must be pardoned for always treating the "servants of truth" with special kindness, who possess neither the will nor the power to judge and have set before them the task of finding "pure knowledge without reference to consequences," knowledge, in plain terms, that comes to nothing. There are very many truths which are unimportant; problems that require no struggle to solve, to say nothing of sacrifice. And in this safe realm of indifference a man may very successfully become a "cold demon of knowledge." And yet — if we find whole regiments of learned inquirers being turned to such demons in some age specially favourable to them, it is always

unfortunately possible that the age is lacking in a great and strong sense of justice, the noblest spring of the so-called impulse to truth.

Consider the historical virtuoso of the present time: is he the justest man of his age? True, he has developed in himself such a delicacy and sensitiveness that "nothing human is alien to him." Times and persons most widely separated come together in the concords of his lyre. He has become a passive instrument, whose tones find an echo in similar instruments: until the whole atmosphere of a time is filled with such echoes, all buzzing in one soft chord. Yet I think one only hears the overtones of the original historical note: its rough powerful quality can be no longer guessed from these thin and shrill vibrations. The original note sang of action, need, and terror; the overtone lulls us into a soft dilettante sleep. It is as though the heroic symphony had been arranged for two flutes for the use of dreaming opium-smokers. We can now judge how these virtuosi stand towards the claim of the modern man to a higher and purer conception of justice. This virtue has never a pleasing quality; it never charms; it is harsh and strident. Generosity stands very low on the ladder of the virtues in comparison; and generosity is the mark of a few rare historians! Most of them only get as far as tolerance, in other words they leave what cannot be explained away, they correct it and touch it up condescendingly, on the tacit assumption that the novice will count it as justice if the past be narrated without harshness or open expressions of hatred. But only superior strength can really judge; weakness must tolerate, if it do not pretend to be strength and turn justice to a play-actress. There is still a dreadful class of historians remaining — clever, stern and honest, but narrow-minded: who have the "good will" to be just with a pathetic belief in their actual judgments, which are all false; for the same reason, almost, as the verdicts of the usual juries are false. How difficult it is to find a real historical talent, if we exclude all the disguised egoists, and the partisans who pretend to take up an impartial attitude for the sake of their own unholy game! And we also exclude the thoughtless folk who write history in the naïve faith that justice resides in the popular view of their time, and that to write in the spirit of the time is to be just; a faith that is found in

all religions, and which, in religion, serves very well. The measurement of the opinions and deeds of the past by the universal opinions of the present is called "objectivity" by these simple people: they find the canon of all truth here: their work is to adapt the past to the present triviality. And they call all historical writing "subjective" that does not regard these popular opinions as canonical.

Might not an illusion lurk in the highest interpretation of the word objectivity? We understand by it a certain standpoint in the historian, who sees the procession of motive and consequence too clearly for it to have an effect on his own personality. We think of the æsthetic phenomenon of the detachment from all personal concern with which the painter sees the picture and forgets himself, in a stormy landscape, amid thunder and lightning, or on a rough sea: and we require the same artistic vision and absorption in his object from the historian. But it is only a superstition to say that the picture given to such a man by the object really shows the truth of things. Unless it be that objects are expected in such moments to paint or photograph themselves by their own activity on a purely passive medium!

But this would be a myth, and a bad one at that. One forgets that this moment is actually the powerful and spontaneous moment of creation in the artist, of "composition" in its highest form, of which the result will be an artistically, but not an historically, true picture. To think objectively, in this sense, of history is the work of the dramatist: to think one thing with another, and weave the elements into a single whole; with the presumption that the unity of plan must be put into the objects if it be not already there. So man veils and subdues the past, and expresses his impulse to art — but not his impulse to truth or justice. Objectivity and justice have nothing to do with each other. There could be a kind of historical writing that had no drop of common fact in it and yet could claim to be called in the highest degree objective. Grillparzer goes so far as to say that "history is nothing but the manner in which the spirit of man apprehends facts that are obscure to him, links things together whose connection heaven only knows, replaces the unintelligible by something intelligible, puts his own ideas of

causation into the external world, which can perhaps be explained only from within: and assumes the existence of chance, where thousands of small causes may be really at work. Each man has his own individual needs, and so millions of tendencies are running together, straight or crooked, parallel or across, forward or backward, helping or hindering each other. They have all the appearance of chance, and make it impossible, quite apart from all natural influences, to establish any universal lines on which past events must have run." But as a result of this so-called "objective" way of looking at things, such a "must" ought to be made clear. It is a presumption that takes a curious form if adopted by the historian as a dogma. Schiller is quite clear about its truly subjective nature when he says of the historian, "one event after the other begins to draw away from blind chance and lawless freedom, and take its place as the member of an harmonious whole — *which is of course only apparent in its presentation*." But what is one to think of the innocent statement, wavering between tautology and nonsense, of a famous historical virtuoso? "It seems that all human actions and impulses are subordinate to the process of the material world, that works unnoticed, powerfully and irresistibly." In such a sentence one no longer finds obscure wisdom in the form of obvious folly; as in the saying of Goethe's gardener, "Nature may be forced but not compelled," or in the notice on the side-show at a fair, in Swift: "The largest elephant in the world, except himself, to be seen here." For what opposition is there between human action and the process of the world? It seems to me that such historians cease to be instructive as soon as they begin to generalise; their weakness is shown by their obscurity. In other sciences the generalisations are the most important things, as they contain the laws. But if such generalisations as these are to stand as laws, the historian's labour is lost; for the residue of truth, after the obscure and insoluble part is removed, is nothing but the commonest knowledge. The smallest range of experience will teach it. But to worry whole peoples for the purpose, and spend many hard years of work on it, is like crowding one scientific experiment on another long after the law can be deduced from the results already obtained: and this absurd excess of experiment

has been the bane of all natural science since Zollner. If the value of a drama lay merely in its final scene, the drama itself would be a very long, crooked and laborious road to the goal: and I hope history will not find its whole significance in general propositions, and regard them as its blossom and fruit. On the contrary, its real value lies in inventing ingenious variations on a probably commonplace theme, in raising the popular melody to a universal symbol and showing what a world of depth, power and beauty exists in it.

But this requires above all a great artistic faculty, a creative vision from a height, the loving study of the data of experience, the free elaborating of a given type, — objectivity in fact, though this time as a positive quality. Objectivity is so often merely a phrase. Instead of the quiet gaze of the artist that is lit by an inward flame, we have an affectation of tranquillity; just as a cold detachment may mask a lack of moral feeling. In some cases a triviality of thought, the everyday wisdom that is too dull not to seem calm and disinterested, comes to represent the artistic condition in which the subjective side has quite sunk out of sight. Everything is favoured that does not rouse emotion, and the driest phrase is the correct one. They go so far as to accept a man who is *not affected at all* by some particular moment in the past as the right man to describe it. This is the usual relation of the Greeks and the classical scholars. They have nothing to do with each other — and this is called “objectivity”! The intentional air of detachment that is assumed for effect, the sober art of the superficial motive-hunter is most exasperating when the highest and rarest things are in question; and it is the *vanity* of the historian that drives him to this attitude of indifference. He goes to justify the axiom that a man’s vanity corresponds to his lack of wit. No, be honest at any rate! Do not pretend to the artist’s strength, that is the real objectivity; do not try to be just, if you are not born to that dread vocation. As if it were the task of every time to be just to everything before it! Ages and generations have never the right to be the judges of all previous ages and generations: only to the rarest men in them can that difficult mission fall. Who compels you to judge? If it is your wish — you must prove first that you are capable of justice. As judges, you must stand higher

than that which is to be judged: as it is, you have only come later. The guests that come last to the table should rightly take the last places: and will you take the first? Then do some great and mighty deed: the place may be prepared for you then, even though you do come last.

You can only explain the past by what is highest in the present. Only by straining the noblest qualities you have to their highest power will you find out what is greatest in the past, most worth knowing and preserving. Like by like! otherwise you will draw the past to your own level. Do not believe any history that does not spring from the mind of a rare spirit. You will know the quality of the spirit, by its being forced to say something universal, or to repeat something that is known already; the fine historian must have the power of coining the known into a thing never heard before and proclaiming the universal so simply and profoundly that the simple is lost in the profound, and the profound in the simple. No one can be a great historian and artist, and a shallowpate at the same time. But one must not despise the workers who sift and cast together the material because they can never become great historians. They must, still less, be confounded with them, for they are the necessary bricklayers and apprentices in the service of the master: just as the French used to speak, more naïvely than a German would, of the "historiens de M. Thiers." These workmen should gradually become extremely learned, but never, for that reason, turn to be masters. Great learning and great shallowness go together very well under one hat.

Thus, history is to be written by the man of experience and character. He who has not lived through something greater and nobler than others, will not be able to explain anything great and noble in the past. The language of the past is always oracular: you will only understand it as builders of the future who know the present. We can only explain the extraordinarily wide influence of Delphi by the fact that the Delphic priests had an exact knowledge of the past: and, similarly, only he who is building up the future has a right to judge the past. If you set a great aim before your eyes, you control at the same time the itch for analysis that makes the present into a desert for you, and all rest, all peaceful growth and

ripening, impossible. Hedge yourselves with a great, all-embracing hope, and strive on. Make of yourselves a mirror where the future may see itself, and forget the superstition that you are Epigoni. You have enough to ponder and find out, in pondering the life of the future: but do not ask history to show you the means and the instrument to it. If you live yourselves back into the history of great men, you will find in it the high command to come to maturity and leave that blighting system of cultivation offered by your time: which sees its own profit in not allowing you to become ripe, that it may use and dominate you while you are yet unripe. And if you want biographies, do not look for those with the legend "Mr. So-and-so and his times," but for one whose title-page might be inscribed "a fighter against his time." Feast your souls on Plutarch, and dare to believe in yourselves when you believe in his heroes. A hundred such men — educated against the fashion of to-day, made familiar with the heroic, and come to maturity — are enough to give an eternal quietus to the noisy sham education of this time.

VII.

The unrestrained historical sense, pushed to its logical extreme, uproots the future, because it destroys illusions and robs existing things of the only atmosphere in which they can live. Historical justice, even if practised conscientiously, with a pure heart, is therefore a dreadful virtue, because it always undermines and ruins the living thing: its judgment always means annihilation. If there be no constructive impulse behind the historical one, if the clearance of rubbish be not merely to leave the ground free for the hopeful living future to build its house, if justice alone be supreme, the creative instinct is sapped and discouraged. A religion, for example, that has to be turned into a matter of historical knowledge by the power of pure justice, and to be scientifically studied throughout, is destroyed at the end of it all. For the historical audit brings so much to light which is false and absurd, violent and inhuman, that the condition of pious illusion falls to pieces. And a thing can only live through a pious illusion. For man

is creative only through love and in the shadow of love's illusions, only through the unconditional belief in perfection and righteousness. Everything that forces a man to be no longer unconditioned in his love, cuts at the root of his strength: he must wither, and be dishonoured. Art has the opposite effect to history: and only perhaps if history suffer transformation into a pure work of art, can it preserve instincts or arouse them. Such history would be quite against the analytical and inartistic tendencies of our time, and even be considered false. But the history that merely destroys without any impulse to construct, will in the long-run make its instruments tired of life; for such men destroy illusions, and "he who destroys illusions in himself and others is punished by the ultimate tyrant, Nature." For a time a man can take up history like any other study, and it will be perfectly harmless. Recent theology seems to have entered quite innocently into partnership with history, and scarcely sees even now that it has unwittingly bound itself to the Voltairean *écrasez*! No one need expect from that any new and powerful constructive impulse: they might as well have let the so-called Protestant Union serve as the cradle of a new religion, and the jurist Holtzendorf, the editor of the far more dubiously named Protestant Bible, be its John the Baptist. This state of innocence may be continued for some time by the Hegelian philosophy, — still seething in some of the older heads, — by which men can distinguish the "idea of Christianity" from its various imperfect "manifestations"; and persuade themselves that it is the "self-movement of the Idea" that is ever particularising itself in purer and purer forms, and at last becomes the purest, most transparent, in fact scarcely visible form in the brain of the present *theologus liberalis vulgaris*. But to listen to this pure Christianity speaking its mind about the earlier impure Christianity, the uninitiated hearer would often get the impression that the talk was not of Christianity at all but of ... — what are we to think? if we find Christianity described by the "greatest theologians of the century" as the religion that claims to "find itself in all real religions and some other barely possible religions," and if the "true church" is to be a thing "which may become a liquid mass with no fixed outline, with no fixed place for its different parts, but

everything to be peacefully welded together" — what, I ask again, are we to think?

Christianity has been denaturalised by historical treatment — which in its most complete form means "just" treatment — until it has been resolved into pure knowledge and destroyed in the process. This can be studied in everything that has life. For it ceases to have life if it be perfectly dissected, and lives in pain and anguish as soon as the historical dissection begins. There are some who believe in the saving power of German music to revolutionise the German nature. They angrily exclaim against the special injustice done to our culture, when such men as Mozart and Beethoven are beginning to be spattered with the learned mud of the biographers and forced to answer a thousand searching questions on the rack of historical criticism. Is it not premature death, or at least mutilation, for anything whose living influence is not yet exhausted, when men turn their curious eyes to the little minutiæ of life and art, and look for problems of knowledge where one ought to learn to live, and forget problems? Set a couple of these modern biographers to consider the origins of Christianity or the Lutheran reformation: their sober, practical investigations would be quite sufficient to make all spiritual "action at a distance" impossible: just as the smallest animal can prevent the growth of the mightiest oak by simply eating up the acorn. All living things need an atmosphere, a mysterious mist, around them. If that veil be taken away and a religion, an art, or a genius condemned to revolve like a star without an atmosphere, we must not be surprised if it becomes hard and unfruitful, and soon withers. It is so with all great things "that never prosper without some illusion," as Hans Sachs says in the Meistersinger.

Every people, every man even, who would become ripe, needs such a veil of illusion, such a protecting cloud. But now men hate to become ripe, for they honour history above life. They cry in triumph that "science is now beginning to rule life." Possibly it might; but a life thus ruled is not of much value. It is not such true *life*, and promises much less for the future than the life that used to be guided not by science, but by instincts and powerful illusions. But this is not to be

the age of ripe, alert and harmonious personalities, but of work that may be of most use to the commonwealth. Men are to be fashioned to the needs of the time, that they may soon take their place in the machine. They must work in the factory of the "common good" before they are ripe, or rather to prevent them becoming ripe; for this would be a luxury that would draw away a deal of power from the "labour market." Some birds are blinded that they may sing better; I do not think men sing to-day better than their grandfathers, though I am sure they are blinded early. But light, too clear, too sudden and dazzling, is the infamous means used to blind them. The young man is kicked through all the centuries: boys who know nothing of war, diplomacy, or commerce are considered fit to be introduced to political history. We moderns also run through art galleries and hear concerts in the same way as the young man runs through history. We can feel that one thing sounds differently from another, and pronounce on the different "effects." And the power of gradually losing all feelings of strangeness or astonishment, and finally being pleased at anything, is called the historical sense, or historical culture. The crowd of influences streaming on the young soul is so great, the clods of barbarism and violence flung at him so strange and overwhelming, that an assumed stupidity is his only refuge. Where there is a subtler and stronger self-consciousness we find another emotion too — disgust. The young man has become homeless: he doubts all ideas, all moralities. He knows "it was different in every age, and what you are does not matter." In a heavy apathy he lets opinion on opinion pass by him, and understands the meaning of Hölderlin's words when he read the work of Diogenes Laertius on the lives and doctrines of the Greek philosophers: "I have seen here too what has often occurred to me, that the change and waste in men's thoughts and systems is far more tragic than the fates that overtake what men are accustomed to call the only realities." No, such study of history bewilders and overwhelms. It is not necessary for youth, as the ancients show, but even in the highest degree dangerous, as the moderns show. Consider the historical student, the heir of ennui, that appears even in his boyhood. He has the "methods" for original work, the "correct ideas" and the airs of the master at

his fingers' ends. A little isolated period of the past is marked out for sacrifice. He cleverly applies his method, and produces something, or rather, in prouder phrase, "creates" something. He becomes a "servant of truth" and a ruler in the great domain of history. If he was what they call ripe as a boy, he is now over-ripe. You only need shake him and wisdom will rattle down into your lap; but the wisdom is rotten, and every apple has its worm. Believe me, if men work in the factory of science and have to make themselves useful before they are really ripe, science is ruined as much as the slaves who have been employed too soon. I am sorry to use the common jargon about slave-owners and taskmasters in respect of such conditions, that might be thought free from any economic taint: but the words "factory, labour-market, auction-sale, practical use," and all the auxiliaries of egoism, come involuntarily to the lips in describing the younger generation of savants. Successful mediocrity tends to become still more mediocre, science still more "useful." Our modern savants are only wise on one subject, in all the rest they are, to say the least, different from those of the old stamp. In spite of that they demand honour and profit for themselves, as if the state and public opinion were bound to take the new coinage for the same value as the old. The carters have made a trade-compact among themselves, and settled that genius is superfluous, for every carrier is being re-stamped as one. And probably a later age will see that their edifices are only carted together and not built. To those who have ever on their lips the modern cry of battle and sacrifice— "Division of labour! fall into line!" we may say roundly: "If you try to further the progress of science as quickly as possible, you will end by destroying it as quickly as possible; just as the hen is worn out which you force to lay too many eggs." The progress of science has been amazingly rapid in the last decade; but consider the savants, those exhausted hens. They are certainly not "harmonious" natures: they can merely cackle more than before, because they lay eggs oftener: but the eggs are always smaller, though their books are bigger. The natural result of it all is the favourite "popularising" of science (or rather its feminising and infantising), the villainous habit of cutting the cloth of science to fit the figure of the "general

public." Goethe saw the abuse in this, and demanded that science should only influence the outer world by way of *a nobler ideal of action*. The older generation of savants had good reason for thinking this abuse an oppressive burden: the modern savants have an equally good reason for welcoming it, because, leaving their little corner of knowledge out of account, they are part of the "general public" themselves, and its needs are theirs. They only require to take themselves less seriously to be able to open their little kingdom successfully to popular curiosity. This easy-going behaviour is called "the modest condescension of the savant to the people"; whereas in reality he has only "descended" to himself, so far as he is not a savant but a plebeian. Rise to the conception of a people, you learned men; you can never have one noble or high enough. If you thought much of the people, you would have compassion towards them, and shrink from offering your historical aquafortis as a refreshing drink. But you really think very little of them, for you dare not take any reasonable pains for their future; and you act like practical pessimists, men who feel the coming catastrophe and become indifferent and careless of their own and others' existence. "If only the earth last for us: and if it do not last, it is no matter." Thus they come to live an *ironical* existence.

VIII.

It may seem a paradox, though it is none, that I should attribute a kind of "ironical self-consciousness" to an age that is generally so honestly, and clamorously, vain of its historical training; and should see a suspicion hovering near it that there is really nothing to be proud of, and a fear lest the time for rejoicing at historical knowledge may soon have gone by. Goethe has shown a similar riddle in man's nature, in his remarkable study of Newton: he finds a "troubled feeling of his own error" at the base — or rather on the height — of his being, just as if he was conscious at times of having a deeper insight into things, that vanished the moment after. This gave him a certain ironical view of his own nature. And one

finds that the greater and more developed “historical men” are conscious of all the superstition and absurdity in the belief that a people’s education need be so extremely historical as it is; the mightiest nations, mightiest in action and influence, have lived otherwise, and their youth has been trained otherwise. The knowledge gives a sceptical turn to their minds. “The absurdity and superstition,” these sceptics say, “suit men like ourselves, who come as the latest withered shoots of a gladder and mightier stock, and fulfil Hesiod’s prophecy, that men will one day be born gray-headed, and that Zeus will destroy that generation as soon as the sign be visible.” Historical culture is really a kind of inherited grayness, and those who have borne its mark from childhood must believe instinctively in *the old age of mankind*. To old age belongs the old man’s business of looking back and casting up his accounts, of seeking consolation in the memories of the past, — in historical culture. But the human race is tough and persistent, and will not admit that the lapse of a thousand years, or a hundred thousand, entitles any one to sum up its progress from the past to the future; that is, it will not be observed as a whole at all by that infinitesimal atom, the individual man. What is there in a couple of thousand years — the period of thirty-four consecutive human lives of sixty years each — to make us speak of youth at the beginning, and “the old age of mankind” at the end of them? Does not this paralysing belief in a fast-fading humanity cover the misunderstanding of a theological idea, inherited from the Middle Ages, that the end of the world is approaching and we are waiting anxiously for the judgment? Does not the increasing demand for historical judgment give us that idea in a new dress? as if our time were the latest possible time, and commanded to hold that universal judgment of the past, which the Christian never expected from a man, but from “the Son of Man.” The *memento mori*, spoken to humanity as well as the individual, was a sting that never ceased to pain, the crown of mediæval knowledge and consciousness.

The opposite message of a later time, *memento vivere*, is spoken rather timidly, without the full power of the lungs; and there is something almost dishonest about it. For mankind still keeps to its *memento mori*, and shows it by the universal

need for history; science may flap its wings as it will, it has never been able to gain the free air. A deep feeling of hopelessness has remained, and taken the historical colouring that has now darkened and depressed all higher education. A religion that, of all the hours of man's life, thinks the last the most important, that has prophesied the end of earthly life and condemned all creatures to live in the fifth act of a tragedy, may call forth the subtlest and noblest powers of man, but it is an enemy to all new planting, to all bold attempts or free aspirations. It opposes all flight into the unknown, because it has no life or hope there itself. It only lets the new bud press forth on sufferance, to blight it in its own good time: "it might lead life astray and give it a false value." What the Florentines did under the influence of Savonarola's exhortations, when they made the famous holocaust of pictures, manuscripts, masks and mirrors, Christianity would like to do with every culture that allured to further effort and bore that *memento vivere* on its standard. And if it cannot take the direct way — the way of main force — it gains its end all the same by allying itself with historical culture, though generally without its connivance; and speaking through its mouth, turns away every fresh birth with a shrug of its shoulders, and makes us feel all the more that we are late-comers and Epigoni, that we are, in a word, born with gray hair. The deep and serious contemplation of the unworthiness of all past action, of the world ripe for judgment, has been whittled down to the sceptical consciousness that it is anyhow a good thing to know all that has happened, as it is too late to do anything better. The historical sense makes its servants passive and retrospective. Only in moments of forgetfulness, when that sense is dormant, does the man who is sick of the historical fever ever act; though he only analyses his deed again after it is over (which prevents it from having any further consequences), and finally puts it on the dissecting table for the purposes of history. In this sense we are still living in the Middle Ages, and history is still a disguised theology; just as the reverence with which the unlearned layman looks on the learned class is inherited through the clergy. What men gave formerly to the Church they give now, though in smaller measure, to science. But the fact of giving at all is the work of the

Church, not of the modern spirit, which among its other good qualities has something of the miser in it, and is a bad hand at the excellent virtue of liberality.

These words may not be very acceptable, any more than my derivation of the excess of history from the mediæval *memento mori* and the hopelessness that Christianity bears in its heart towards all future ages of earthly existence. But you should always try to replace my hesitating explanations by a better one. For the origin of historical culture, and of its absolutely radical antagonism to the spirit of a new time and a "modern consciousness," must itself be known by a historical process. History must solve the problem of history, science must turn its sting against itself. This threefold "must" is the imperative of the "new spirit," if it is really to contain something new, powerful, vital and original. Or is it true that we Germans — to leave the Romance nations out of account — must always be mere "followers" in all the higher reaches of culture, because that is all we *can* be? The words of Wilhelm Wackernagel are well worth pondering: "We Germans are a nation of 'followers,' and with all our higher science and even our faith, are merely the successors of the ancient world. Even those who are opposed to it are continually breathing the immortal spirit of classical culture with that of Christianity: and if any one could separate these two elements from the living air surrounding the soul of man, there would not be much remaining for a spiritual life to exist on." Even if we would rest content with our vocation to follow antiquity, even if we decided to take it in an earnest and strenuous spirit and to show our high prerogative in our earnestness, — we should yet be compelled to ask whether it were our eternal destiny to be pupils of a fading antiquity. We might be allowed at some time to put our aim higher and further above us. And after congratulating ourselves on having brought that secondary spirit of Alexandrian culture in us to such marvellous productiveness — through our "universal history" — we might go on to place before us, as our noblest prize, the still higher task of striving beyond and above this Alexandrian world; and bravely find our prototypes in the ancient Greek world, where all was great, natural and human. But it is just *there* that we find the reality of a true unhistorical culture —

and in spite of that, or perhaps because of it, an unspeakably rich and vital culture. Were we Germans nothing but followers, we could not be anything greater or prouder than the lineal inheritors and followers of such a culture.

This however must be added. The thought of being Epigoni, that is often a torture, can yet create a spring of hope for the future, to the individual as well as the people: so far, that is, as we can regard ourselves as the heirs and followers of the marvellous classical power, and see therein both our honour and our spur. But not as the late and bitter fruit of a powerful stock, giving that stock a further spell of cold life, as antiquaries and grave-diggers. Such late-comers live truly an ironical existence. Annihilation follows their halting walk on tiptoe through life. They shudder before it in the midst of their rejoicing over the past. They are living memories, and their own memories have no meaning; for there are none to inherit them. And thus they are wrapped in the melancholy thought that their life is an injustice, which no future life can set right again.

Suppose that these antiquaries, these late arrivals, were to change their painful ironic modesty for a certain shamelessness. Suppose we heard them saying, aloud, "The race is at its zenith, for it has manifested itself consciously for the first time." We should have a comedy, in which the dark meaning of a certain very celebrated philosophy would unroll itself for the benefit of German culture. I believe there has been no dangerous turning-point in the progress of German culture in this century that has not been made more dangerous by the enormous and still living influence of this Hegelian philosophy. The belief that one is a late-comer in the world is, anyhow, harmful and degrading: but it must appear frightful and devastating when it raises our late-comer to godhead, by a neat turn of the wheel, as the true meaning and object of all past creation, and his conscious misery is set up as the perfection of the world's history. Such a point of view has accustomed the Germans to talk of a "world-process," and justify their own time as its necessary result. And it has put history in the place of the other spiritual powers, art and religion, as the one sovereign; inasmuch as it is the "Idea realising itself," the "Dialectic of the spirit of the nations," and the "tribunal of the world."

History understood in this Hegelian way has been contemptuously called God's sojourn upon earth, — though the God was first created by the history. He, at any rate, became transparent and intelligible inside Hegelian skulls, and has risen through all the dialectically possible steps in his being up to the manifestation of the Self: so that for Hegel the highest and final stage of the world-process came together in his own Berlin existence. He ought to have said that everything after him was merely to be regarded as the musical coda of the great historical rondo, — or rather, as simply superfluous. He has not said it; and thus he has implanted in a generation leavened throughout by him the worship of the "power of history," that practically turns every moment into a sheer gaping at success, into an idolatry of the actual: for which we have now discovered the characteristic phrase "to adapt ourselves to circumstances." But the man who has once learnt to crook the knee and bow the head before the power of history, nods "yes" at last, like a Chinese doll, to every power, whether it be a government or a public opinion or a numerical majority; and his limbs move correctly as the power pulls the string. If each success have come by a "rational necessity," and every event show the victory of logic or the "Idea," then — down on your knees quickly, and let every step in the ladder of success have its reverence! There are no more living mythologies, you say? Religions are at their last gasp? Look at the religion of the power of history, and the priests of the mythology of Ideas, with their scarred knees! Do not all the virtues follow in the train of the new faith? And shall we not call it unselfishness, when the historical man lets himself be turned into an "objective" mirror of all that is? Is it not magnanimity to renounce all power in heaven and earth in order to adore the mere fact of power? Is it not justice, always to hold the balance of forces in your hands and observe which is the stronger and heavier? And what a school of politeness is such a contemplation of the past! To take everything objectively, to be angry at nothing, to love nothing, to understand everything — makes one gentle and pliable. Even if a man brought up in this school will show himself openly offended, one is just as pleased,

knowing it is only meant in the artistic sense of *ira et studium*, though it is really *sine ira et studio*.

What old-fashioned thoughts I have on such a combination of virtue and mythology! But they must out, however one may laugh at them. I would even say that history always teaches— "it was once," and morality— "it ought not to be, or have been." So history becomes a compendium of actual immorality. But how wrong would one be to regard history as the judge of this actual immorality! Morality is offended by the fact that a Raphael had to die at thirty-six; such a being ought not to die. If you came to the help of history, as the apologists of the actual, you would say: "he had spoken everything that was in him to speak, a longer life would only have enabled him to create a similar beauty, and not a new beauty," and so on. Thus you become an *advocatus diaboli* by setting up the success, the fact, as your idol: whereas the fact is always dull, at all times more like calf than a god. Your apologies for history are helped by ignorance: for it is only because you do not know what a *natura naturans* like Raphael is, that you are not on fire when you think it existed once and can never exist again. Some one has lately tried to tell us that Goethe had out-lived himself with his eighty-two years: and yet I would gladly take two of Goethe's "outlived" years in exchange for whole cartloads of fresh modern lifetimes, to have another set of such conversations as those with Eckermann, and be preserved from all the "modern" talk of these esquires of the moment. How few living men have a right to live, as against those mighty dead! That the many live and those few live no longer, is simply a brutal truth, that is, a piece of unalterable folly, a blank wall of "it was once so" against the moral judgment "it ought not to have been." Yes, against the moral judgment! For you may speak of what virtue you will, of justice, courage, magnanimity, of wisdom and human compassion, — you will find the virtuous man will always rise against the blind force of facts, the tyranny of the actual, and submit himself to laws that are not the fickle laws of history. He ever swims against the waves of history, either by fighting his passions, as the nearest brute facts of his existence, or by training himself to honesty amid the

glittering nets spun round him by falsehood. Were history nothing more than the "all-embracing system of passion and error," man would have to read it as Goethe wished Werther to be read; — just as if it called to him, "Be a man and follow me not!" But fortunately history also keeps alive for us the memory of the great "fighters against history," that is, against the blind power of the actual; it puts itself in the pillory just by glorifying the true historical nature in men who troubled themselves very little about the "thus it is," in order that they might follow a "thus it must be" with greater joy and greater pride. Not to drag their generation to the grave, but to found a new one — that is the motive that ever drives them onward; and even if they are born late, there is a way of living by which they can forget it — and future generations will know them only as the first-comers.

IX.

Is perhaps our time such a "first-comer"? Its historical sense is so strong, and has such universal and boundless expression, that future times will commend it, if only for this, as a first-comer — if there be any future time, in the sense of future culture. But here comes a grave doubt. Close to the modern man's pride there stands his irony about himself, his consciousness that he must live in a historical, or twilit, atmosphere, the fear that he can retain none of his youthful hopes and powers. Here and there one goes further into cynicism, and justifies the course of history, nay, the whole evolution of the world, as simply leading up to the modern man, according to the cynical canon:— "what you see now had to come, man had to be thus and not otherwise, no one can stand against this necessity." He who cannot rest in a state of irony flies for refuge to the cynicism. The last decade makes him a present of one of its most beautiful inventions, a full and well-rounded phrase for this cynicism: he calls his way of living thoughtlessly and after the fashion of his time, "the full surrender of his personality to the world-process." The personality and the world-process! The world-process and the

personality of the earthworm! If only one did not eternally hear the word “world, world, world,” that hyperbole of all hyperboles; when we should only speak, in a decent manner, of “man, man, man”! Heirs of the Greeks and Romans, of Christianity? All that seems nothing to the cynics. But “heirs of the world-process”; the final target of the world-process; the meaning and solution of all riddles of the universe, the ripest fruit on the tree of knowledge! — that is what I call a right noble thought: by this token are the firstlings of every time to be known, although they may have arrived last. The historical imagination has never flown so far, even in a dream; for now the history of man is merely the continuation of that of animals and plants: the universal historian finds traces of himself even in the utter depths of the sea, in the living slime. He stands astounded in face of the enormous way that man has run, and his gaze quivers before the mightier wonder, the modern man who can see all this way! He stands proudly on the pyramid of the world-process: and while he lays the final stone of his knowledge, he seems to cry aloud to listening Nature: “We are at the top, we are the top, we are the completion of Nature!”

O thou too proud European of the nineteenth century, art thou not mad? Thy knowledge does not complete Nature, it only kills thine own nature! Measure the height of what thou knowest by the depths of thy power to *do*. Thou climbest the sunbeams of knowledge up towards heaven — but also down to Chaos. Thy manner of going is fatal to thee; the ground slips from under thy feet into the unknown; thy life has no other stay, but only spider’s webs that every new stroke of thy knowledge tears asunder. — But not another serious word about this, for there is a lighter side to it all.

The moralist, the artist, the saint and the statesman may well be troubled, when they see that all foundations are breaking up in mad unconscious ruin, and resolving themselves into the ever flowing stream of becoming; that all creation is being tirelessly spun into webs of history by the modern man, the great spider in the mesh of the world-net. We ourselves may be glad for once in a way that we see it all in the shining magic mirror of a philosophical parodist, in whose brain

the time has come to an ironical consciousness of itself, to a point even of wickedness, in Goethe's phrase. Hegel once said, "when the spirit makes a fresh start, we philosophers are at hand." Our time did make a fresh start — into irony, and lo! Edward von Hartmann was at hand, with his famous Philosophy of the Unconscious — or, more plainly, his philosophy of unconscious irony. We have seldom read a more jovial production, a greater philosophical joke than Hartmann's book. Any one whom it does not fully enlighten about "becoming," who is not swept and garnished throughout by it, is ready to become a monument of the past himself. The beginning and end of the world-process, from the first throb of consciousness to its final leap into nothingness, with the task of our generation settled for it; — all drawn from that clever fount of inspiration, the Unconscious, and glittering in Apocalyptic light, imitating an honest seriousness to the life, as if it were a serious philosophy and not a huge joke, — such a system shows its creator to be one of the first philosophical parodists of all time. Let us then sacrifice on his altar, and offer the inventor of a true universal medicine a lock of hair, in Schleiermacher's phrase. For what medicine would be more salutary to combat the excess of historical culture than Hartmann's parody of the world's history?

If we wished to express in the fewest words what Hartmann really has to tell us from his mephitic tripod of unconscious irony, it would be something like this: our time could only remain as it is, if men should become thoroughly sick of this existence. And I fervently believe he is right. The frightful petrifaction of the time, the restless rattle of the ghostly bones, held naïvely up to us by David Strauss as the most beautiful fact of all — is justified by Hartmann not only from the past, *ex causis efficientibus*, but also from the future, *ex causa finali*. The rogue let light stream over our time from the last day, and saw that it was very good, — for him, that is, who wishes to feel the indigestibility of life at its full strength, and for whom the last day cannot come quickly enough. True, Hartmann calls the old age of life that mankind is approaching the "old age of man": but that is the blessed state, according to him, where there is only a successful mediocrity;

where art is the “evening’s amusement of the Berlin financier,” and “the time has no more need for geniuses, either because it would be casting pearls before swine, or because the time has advanced beyond the stage where the geniuses are found, to one more important,” to that stage of social evolution, in fact, in which every worker “leads a comfortable existence, with hours of work that leave him sufficient leisure to cultivate his intellect.” Rogue of rogues, you say well what is the aspiration of present-day mankind: but you know too what a spectre of disgust will arise at the end of this old age of mankind, as the result of the intellectual culture of stolid mediocrity. It is very pitiful to see, but it will be still more pitiful yet. “Antichrist is visibly extending his arms:” yet it *must be so*, for after all we are on the right road — of disgust at all existence. “Forward then, boldly, with the world-process, as workers in the vineyard of the Lord, for it is the process alone that can lead to redemption!”

The vineyard of the Lord! The process! To redemption! Who does not see and hear in this how historical culture, that only knows the word “becoming,” parodies itself on purpose and says the most irresponsible things about itself through its grotesque mask? For what does the rogue mean by this cry to the workers in the vineyard? By what “work” are they to strive boldly forward? Or, to ask another question: — what further has the historically educated fanatic of the world-process to do, — swimming and drowning as he is in the sea of becoming, — that he may at last gather in that vintage of disgust, the precious grape of the vineyard? He has nothing to do but to live on as he has lived, love what he has loved, hate what he has hated, and read the newspapers he has always read. The only sin is for him to live otherwise than he has lived. We are told how he has lived, with monumental clearness, by that famous page with its large typed sentences, on which the whole rabble of our modern cultured folk have thrown themselves in blind ecstasy, because they believe they read their own justification there, haloed with an Apocalyptic light. For the unconscious parodist has demanded of every one of them, “the full surrender of his personality to the world-process, for the sake of his end, the redemption of the world”: or still more

clearly,— “the assertion of the will to live is proclaimed to be the first step on the right road: for it is only in the full surrender to life and its sorrow, and not in the cowardice of personal renunciation and retreat, that anything can be done for the world-process.... The striving for the denial of the individual will is as foolish as it is useless, more foolish even than suicide.... The thoughtful reader will understand without further explanation how a practical philosophy can be erected on these principles, and that such a philosophy cannot endure any disunion, but only the fullest reconciliation with life.”

The thoughtful reader will understand! Then one really could misunderstand Hartmann! And what a splendid joke it is, that he should be misunderstood! Why should the Germans of to-day be particularly subtle? A valiant Englishman looks in vain for “delicacy of perception” and dares to say that “in the German mind there does seem to be something splay, something blunt-edged, unhandy and infelicitous.” Could the great German parodist contradict this? According to him, we are approaching “that ideal condition in which the human race makes its history with full consciousness”: but we are obviously far from the perhaps more ideal condition, in which mankind can read Hartmann’s book with full consciousness. If we once reach it, the word “world-process” will never pass any man’s lips again without a smile. For he will remember the time when people listened to the mock gospel of Hartmann, sucked it in, attacked it, reverenced it, extended it and canonised it with all the honesty of that “German mind,” with “the uncanny seriousness of an owl,” as Goethe has it. But the world must go forward, the ideal condition cannot be won by dreaming, it must be fought and wrestled for, and the way to redemption lies only through joyousness, the way to redemption from that dull, owlish seriousness. The time will come when we shall wisely keep away from all constructions of the world-process, or even of the history of man; a time when we shall no more look at masses but at individuals, who form a sort of bridge over the wan stream of becoming. They may not perhaps continue a process, but they live out of time, as contemporaries: and thanks to history that permits such a company, they live as the Republic of

geniuses of which Schopenhauer speaks. One giant calls to the other across the waste spaces of time, and the high spirit-talk goes on, undisturbed by the wanton noisy dwarfs who creep among them. The task of history is to be the mediator between these, and even to give the motive and power to produce the great man. The aim of mankind can lie ultimately only in its highest examples.

Our low comedian has his word on this too, with his wonderful dialectic, which is just as genuine as its admirers are admirable. “The idea of evolution cannot stand with our giving the world-process an endless duration in the past, for thus every conceivable evolution must have taken place, which is not the case (O rogue!); and so we cannot allow the process an endless duration in the future. Both would raise the conception of evolution to a mere ideal (And again rogue!), and would make the world-process like the sieve of the Danaides. The complete victory of the logical over the illogical (O thou complete rogue!) must coincide with the last day, the end in time of the world-process.” No, thou clear, scornful spirit, so long as the illogical rules as it does to-day, — so long, for example, as the world-process can be spoken of as thou speakest of it, amid such deep-throated assent, — the last day is yet far off. For it is still too joyful on this earth, many an illusion still blooms here — like the illusion of thy contemporaries about thee. We are not yet ripe to be hurled into thy nothingness: for we believe that we shall have a still more splendid time, when men once begin to understand thee, thou misunderstood, unconscious one! But if, in spite of that, disgust shall come throned in power, as thou hast prophesied to thy readers; if thy portrayal of the present and the future shall prove to be right, — and no one has despised them with such loathing as thou, — I am ready then to cry with the majority in the form prescribed by thee, that next Saturday evening, punctually at twelve o’clock, thy world shall fall to pieces. And our decree shall conclude thus — from to-morrow time shall not exist, and the *Times* shall no more be published. Perhaps it will be in vain, and our decree of no avail: at any rate we have still time for a fine experiment. Take a balance and put Hartmann’s “Unconscious” in one of the

scales, and his “World-process” in the other. There are some who believe they weigh equally; for in each scale there is an evil word — and a good joke.

When they are once understood, no one will take Hartmann’s words on the world-process as anything but a joke. It is, as a fact, high time to move forward with the whole battalion of satire and malice against the excesses of the “historical sense,” the wanton love of the world-process at the expense of life and existence, the blind confusion of all perspective. And it will be to the credit of the philosopher of the Unconscious that he has been the first to see the humour of the world-process, and to succeed in making others see it still more strongly by the extraordinary seriousness of his presentation. The existence of the “world” and “humanity” need not trouble us for some time, except to provide us with a good joke: for the presumption of the small earthworm is the most uproariously comic thing on the face of the earth. Ask thyself to what end thou art here, as an individual; and if no one can tell thee, try then to justify the meaning of thy existence *a posteriori*, by putting before thyself a high and noble end. Perish on that rock! I know no better aim for life than to be broken on something great and impossible, *animæ magnæ prodigus*. But if we have the doctrines of the finality of “becoming,” of the flux of all ideas, types, and species, of the lack of all radical difference between man and beast (a true but fatal idea as I think), — if we have these thrust on the people in the usual mad way for another generation, no one need be surprised if that people drown on its little miserable shoals of egoism, and petrify in its self-seeking. At first it will fall asunder and cease to be a people. In its place perhaps individualist systems, secret societies for the extermination of non-members, and similar utilitarian creations, will appear on the theatre of the future. Are we to continue to work for these creations and write history from the standpoint of the *masses*; to look for laws in it, to be deduced from the needs of the masses, the laws of motion of the lowest loam and clay strata of society? The masses seem to be worth notice in three aspects only: first as the copies of great men, printed on bad paper from worn-out plates, next as a contrast to the great men, and lastly as their tools: for the rest, let the devil and statistics fly away with

them! How could statistics prove that there are laws in history? Laws? Yes, they may prove how common and abominably uniform the masses are: and should we call the effects of leaden folly, imitation, love and hunger — laws? We may admit it: but we are sure of this too — that so far as there are laws in history, the laws are of no value and the history of no value either. And least valuable of all is that kind of history which takes the great popular movements as the most important events of the past, and regards the great men only as their clearest expression, the visible bubbles on the stream. Thus the masses have to produce the great man, chaos to bring forth order; and finally all the hymns are naturally sung to the teeming chaos. Everything is called "great" that has moved the masses for some long time, and becomes, as they say, a "historical power." But is not this really an intentional confusion of quantity and quality? When the brutish mob have found some idea, a religious idea for example, which satisfies them, when they have defended it through thick and thin for centuries then, and then only, will they discover its inventor to have been a great man. The highest and noblest does not affect the masses at all. The historical consequences of Christianity, its "historical power," toughness and persistence prove nothing, fortunately, as to its founder's greatness, They would have been a witness against him. For between him and the historical success of Christianity lies a dark heavy weight of passion and error, lust of power and honour, and the crushing force of the Roman Empire. From this, Christianity had its earthly taste, and its earthly foundations too, that made its continuance in this world possible. Greatness should not depend on success; Demosthenes is great without it. The purest and noblest adherents of Christianity have always doubted and hindered, rather than helped, its effect in the world, its so-called "historical power"; for they were accustomed to stand outside the "world," and cared little for the "process of the Christian Idea." Hence they have generally remained unknown to history, and their very names are lost. In Christian terms the devil is the prince of the world, and the lord of progress and consequence: he is the power behind all "historical power," and so will it remain, however ill it may sound to-day in ears that are accustomed to canonise such

power and consequence. The world has become skilled at giving new names to things and even baptizing the devil. It is truly an hour of great danger. Men seem to be near the discovery that the egoism of individuals, groups or masses has been at all times the lever of the "historical movements": and yet they are in no way disturbed by the discovery, but proclaim that "egoism shall be our god." With this new faith in their hearts, they begin quite intentionally to build future history on egoism: though it must be a clever egoism, one that allows of some limitation, that it may stand firmer; one that studies history for the purpose of recognising the foolish kind of egoism. Their study has taught them that the state has a special mission in all future egoistic systems: it will be the patron of all the clever egoisms, to protect them with all the power of its military and police against the dangerous outbreaks of the other kind. There is the same idea in introducing history — natural as well as human history — among the labouring classes, whose folly makes them dangerous. For men know well that a grain of historical culture is able to break down the rough, blind instincts and desires, or to turn them to the service of a clever egoism. In fact they are beginning to think, with Edward von Hartmann, of "fixing themselves with an eye to the future in their earthly home, and making themselves comfortable there." Hartmann calls this life the "manhood of humanity" with an ironical reference to what is now called "manhood"; — as if only our sober models of selfishness were embraced by it; just as he prophesies an age of graybeards following on this stage, — obviously another ironical glance at our ancient time-servers. For he speaks of the ripe discretion with which "they view all the stormy passions of their past life and understand the vanity of the ends they seem to have striven for." No, a manhood of crafty and historically cultured egoism corresponds to an old age that hangs to life with no dignity but a horrible tenacity, where the

"last scene of all
That ends this strange eventful history,

Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

Whether the dangers of our life and culture come from these dreary, toothless old men, or from the so-called "men" of Hartmann, we have the right to defend our youth with tooth and claw against both of them, and never tire of saving the future from these false prophets. But in this battle we shall discover an unpleasant truth — that men intentionally help, and encourage, and use, the worst aberrations of the historical sense from which the present time suffers.

They use it, however, against youth, in order to transform it into that ripe "egoism of manhood" they so long for: they use it to overcome the natural reluctance of the young by its magical splendour, which unmans while it enlightens them. Yes, we know only too well the kind of ascendency history can gain; how it can uproot the strongest instincts of youth, passion, courage, unselfishness and love; can cool its feeling for justice, can crush or repress its desire for a slow ripening by the contrary desire to be soon productive, ready and useful; and cast a sick doubt over all honesty and downrightness of feeling. It can even cozen youth of its fairest privilege, the power of planting a great thought with the fullest confidence, and letting it grow of itself to a still greater thought. An excess of history can do all that, as we have seen, by no longer allowing a man to feel and act *unhistorically*: for history is continually shifting his horizon and removing the atmosphere surrounding him. From an infinite horizon he withdraws into himself, back into the small egoistic circle, where he must become dry and withered: he may possibly attain to cleverness, but never to wisdom. He lets himself be talked over, is always calculating and parleying with facts. He is never enthusiastic, but blinks his eyes, and understands how to look for his own profit or his party's in the profit or loss of somebody else. He unlearns all his useless modesty, and turns little by little into the "man" or the "graybeard" of Hartmann. And that is what they *want* him to be: that is the meaning of the present cynical demand for the "full surrender of the personality to the world-

process” — for the sake of his end, the redemption of the world, as the rogue E. von Hartmann tells us. Though redemption can scarcely be the conscious aim of these people: the world were better redeemed by being redeemed from these “men” and “graybeards.” For then would come the reign of youth.

X.

And in this kingdom of youth I can cry Land! Land! Enough, and more than enough, of the wild voyage over dark strange seas, of eternal search and eternal disappointment! The coast is at last in sight. Whatever it be, we must land there, and the worst haven is better than tossing again in the hopeless waves of an infinite scepticism. Let us hold fast by the land: we shall find the good harbours later and make the voyage easier for those who come after us.

The voyage was dangerous and exciting. How far are we even now from that quiet state of contemplation with which we first saw our ship launched! In tracking out the dangers of history, we have found ourselves especially exposed to them. We carry on us the marks of that sorrow which an excess of history brings in its train to the men of the modern time. And this present treatise, as I will not attempt to deny, shows the modern note of a weak personality in the intemperateness of its criticism, the unripeness of its humanity, in the too frequent transitions from irony to cynicism, from arrogance to scepticism. And yet I trust in the inspiring power that directs my vessel instead of genius; I trust in *youth*, that has brought me on the right road in forcing from me a protest against the modern historical education, and a demand that the man must learn to live, above all, and only use history in the service of the life that he has learned to live. He must be young to understand this protest; and considering the premature grayness of our present youth, he can scarcely be young enough if he would understand its reason as well. An example will help me. In Germany, not more than a century ago, a natural instinct for what is called “poetry” was awakened in some young men. Are we to think that the generations who had lived before that time had not

spoken of the art, however really strange and unnatural it may have been to them? We know the contrary; that they had thought, written, and quarrelled about it with all their might — in "words, words, words." Giving life to such words did not prove the death of the word-makers; in a certain sense they are living still. For if, as Gibbon says, nothing but time — though a long time — is needed for a world to perish, so nothing but time — though still more time — is needed for a false idea to be destroyed in Germany, the "Land of Little-by-little." In any event, there are perhaps a hundred men more now than there were a century ago who know what poetry is: perhaps in another century there will be a hundred more who have learned in the meantime what culture is, and that the Germans have had as yet no culture, however proudly they may talk about it. The general satisfaction of the Germans at their culture will seem as foolish and incredible to such men as the once lauded classicism of Gottsched, or the reputation of Ramler as the German Pindar, seemed to us. They will perhaps think this "culture" to be merely a kind of knowledge about culture, and a false and superficial knowledge at that. False and superficial, because the Germans endured the contradiction between life and knowledge, and did not see what was characteristic in the culture of really educated peoples, that it can only rise and bloom from life. But by the Germans it is worn like a paper flower, or spread over like the icing on a cake; and so must remain a useless lie for ever.

The education of youth in Germany starts from this false and unfruitful idea of culture. Its aim, when faced squarely, is not to form the liberally educated man, but the professor, the man of science, who wants to be able to make use of his science as soon as possible, and stands on one side in order to see life clearly. The result, even from a ruthlessly practical point of view, is the historically and æsthetically trained Philistine, the babbler of old saws and new wisdom on Church, State and Art, the sensorium that receives a thousand impressions, the insatiable belly that yet knows not what true hunger and thirst is. An education with such an aim and result is against nature. But only he who is not quite drowned in it can feel that; only youth can feel it, because it still has the instinct

of nature, that is the first to be broken by that education. But he who will break through that education in his turn, must come to the help of youth when called upon; must let the clear light of understanding shine on its unconscious striving, and bring it to a full, vocal consciousness. How is he to attain such a strange end?

Principally by destroying the superstition that this kind of education is *necessary*. People think nothing but this troublesome reality of ours is possible. Look through the literature of higher education in school and college for the last ten years, and you will be astonished — and pained — to find how much alike all the proposals of reform have been; in spite of all the hesitations and violent controversies surrounding them. You will see how blindly they have all adopted the old idea of the "educated man" (in our sense) being the necessary and reasonable basis of the system. The monotonous canon runs thus: the young man must begin with a knowledge of culture, not even with a knowledge of life, still less with life and the living of it. This knowledge of culture is forced into the young mind in the form of historical knowledge; which means that his head is filled with an enormous mass of ideas, taken second-hand from past times and peoples, not from immediate contact with life. He desires to experience something for himself, and feel a close-knit, living system of experiences growing within himself. But his desire is drowned and dizzied in the sea of shams, as if it were possible to sum up in a few years the highest and notablest experiences of ancient times, and the greatest times too. It is the same mad method that carries our young artists off to picture-galleries, instead of the studio of a master, and above all the one studio of the only master, Nature. As if one could discover by a hasty rush through history the ideas and technique of past times, and their individual outlook on life! For life itself is a kind of handicraft that must be learned thoroughly and industriously, and diligently practised, if we are not to have mere botchers and babblers as the issue of it all!

Plato thought it necessary for the first generation of his new society (in the perfect state) to be brought up with the help of a "mighty lie." The children were to be taught to believe that they had all lain dreaming for a long time under the

earth, where they had been moulded and formed by the master-hand of Nature. It was impossible to go against the past, and work against the work of gods! And so it had to be an unbreakable law of nature, that he who is born to be a philosopher has gold in his body, the fighter has only silver, and the workman iron and bronze. As it is not possible to blend these metals, according to Plato, so there could never be any confusion between the classes: the belief in the *æterna veritas* of this arrangement was the basis of the new education and the new state. So the modern German believes also in the *æterna veritas* of his education, of his kind of culture: and yet this belief will fail — as the Platonic state would have failed — if the mighty German lie be ever opposed by the truth, that the German has no culture because he cannot build one on the basis of his education. He wishes for the flower without the root or the stalk; and so he wishes in vain. That is the simple truth, a rude and unpleasant truth, but yet a mighty one.

But our first generation must be brought up in this "mighty truth," and must suffer from it too; for it must educate itself through it, even against its own nature, to attain a new nature and manner of life, which shall yet proceed from the old. So it might say to itself, in the old Spanish phrase, "Defienda me Dios de my," God keep me from myself, from the character, that is, which has been put into me. It must taste that truth drop by drop, like a bitter, powerful medicine. And every man in this generation must subdue himself to pass the judgment on his own nature, which he might pass more easily on his whole time:— "We are without instruction, nay, we are too corrupt to live, to see and hear truly and simply, to understand what is near and natural to us. We have not yet laid even the foundations of culture, for we are not ourselves convinced that we have a sincere life in us." We crumble and fall asunder, our whole being is divided, half mechanically, into an inner and outer side; we are sown with ideas as with dragon's teeth, and bring forth a new dragon-brood of them; we suffer from the malady of words, and have no trust in any feeling that is not stamped with its special word. And being such a dead fabric of words and ideas, that yet has an uncanny movement in it, I have still perhaps the right to say *cogito ergo sum*,

though not *vivo ergo cogito*. I am permitted the empty *esse*, not the full green *vivere*. A primary feeling tells me that I am a thinking being but not a living one, that I am no "animal," but at most a "cogital." "Give me life, and I will soon make you a culture out of it" — will be the cry of every man in this new generation, and they will all know each other by this cry. But who will give them this life?

No god and no man will give it — only their own *youth*. Set this free, and you will set life free as well. For it only lay concealed, in a prison; it is not yet withered or dead — ask your own selves!

But it is sick, this life that is set free, and must be healed. It suffers from many diseases, and not only from the memory of its chains. It suffers from the malady which I have spoken of, the *malady of history*. Excess of history has attacked the plastic power of life, that no more understands how to use the past as a means of strength and nourishment. It is a fearful disease, and yet, if youth had not a natural gift for clear vision, no one would see that it is a disease, and that a paradise of health has been lost. But the same youth, with that same natural instinct of health, has guessed how the paradise can be regained. It knows the magic herbs and simples for the malady of history, and the excess of it. And what are they called?

It is no marvel that they bear the names of poisons: — the antidotes to history are the "unhistorical" and the "super-historical." With these names we return to the beginning of our inquiry and draw near to its final close.

By the word "unhistorical" I mean the power, the art of *forgetting*, and of drawing a limited horizon round one's self. I call the power "super-historical" which turns the eyes from the process of becoming to that which gives existence an eternal and stable character, to art and religion. Science — for it is science that makes us speak of "poisons" — sees in these powers contrary powers: for it considers only that view of things to be true and right, and therefore scientific, which regards something as finished and historical, not as continuing and eternal. Thus it lives in a deep antagonism towards the powers that make for eternity — art and religion, — for it hates the forgetfulness that is the death of knowledge,

and tries to remove all limitation of horizon and cast men into an infinite boundless sea, whose waves are bright with the clear knowledge — of becoming!

If they could only live therein! Just as towns are shaken by an avalanche and become desolate, and man builds his house there in fear and for a season only; so life is broken in sunder and becomes weak and spiritless, if the avalanche of ideas started by science take from man the foundation of his rest and security, the belief in what is stable and eternal. Must life dominate knowledge, or knowledge life? Which of the two is the higher, and decisive power? There is no room for doubt: life is the higher, and the dominating power, for the knowledge that annihilated life would be itself annihilated too. Knowledge presupposes life, and has the same interest in maintaining it that every creature has in its own preservation. Science needs very careful watching: there is a hygiene of life near the volumes of science, and one of its sentences runs thus: — The unhistorical and the super-historical are the natural antidotes against the overpowering of life by history; they are the cures for the historical disease. We who are sick of the disease may suffer a little from the antidote. But this is no proof that the treatment we have chosen is wrong.

And here I see the mission of the youth that forms the first generation of fighters and dragon-slayers: it will bring a more beautiful and blessed humanity and culture, but will have itself no more than a glimpse of the promised land of happiness and wondrous beauty. This youth will suffer both from the malady and its antidotes: and yet it believes in strength and health and boasts a nature closer to the great Nature than its forebears, the cultured men and graybeards of the present. But its mission is to shake to their foundations the present conceptions of “health” and “culture,” and erect hatred and scorn in the place of this rococo mass of ideas. And the clearest sign of its own strength and health is just the fact that it can use no idea, no party-cry from the present-day mint of words and ideas to symbolise its own existence: but only claims conviction from the power in it that acts and fights, breaks up and destroys; and from an ever heightened feeling of life when the hour strikes. You may deny this youth any culture — but how would

youth count that a reproach? You may speak of its rawness and intemperateness — but it is not yet old and wise enough to be acquiescent. It need not pretend to a ready-made culture at all; but enjoys all the rights — and the consolations — of youth, especially the right of brave unthinking honesty and the consolation of an inspiring hope.

I know that such hopeful beings understand all these truisms from within, and can translate them into a doctrine for their own use, through their personal experience. To the others there will appear, in the meantime, nothing but a row of covered dishes, that may perhaps seem empty: until they see one day with astonished eyes that the dishes are full, and that all ideas and impulses and passions are massed together in these truisms that cannot lie covered for long. I leave those doubting ones to time, that brings all things to light; and turn at last to that great company of hope, to tell them the way and the course of their salvation, their rescue from the disease of history, and their own history as well, in a parable; whereby they may again become healthy enough to study history anew, and under the guidance of life make use of the past in that threefold way — monumental, antiquarian, or critical. At first they will be more ignorant than the "educated men" of the present: for they will have unlearnt much and have lost any desire even to discover what those educated men especially wish to know: in fact, their chief mark from the educated point of view will be just their want of science; their indifference and inaccessibility to all the good and famous things. But at the end of the cure, they are men again and have ceased to be mere shadows of humanity. That is something; there is yet hope, and do not ye who hope laugh in your hearts?

How can we reach that end? you will ask. The Delphian god cries his oracle to you at the beginning of your wanderings, "Know thyself." It is a hard saying: for that god "tells nothing and conceals nothing but merely points the way," as Heraclitus said. But whither does he point?

In certain epochs the Greeks were in a similar danger of being overwhelmed by what was past and foreign, and perishing on the rock of "history." They never

lived proud and untouched. Their “culture” was for a long time a chaos of foreign forms and ideas, — Semitic, Babylonian, Lydian and Egyptian, — and their religion a battle of all the gods of the East; just as German culture and religion is at present a death-struggle of all foreign nations and bygone times. And yet, Hellenic culture was no mere mechanical unity, thanks to that Delphic oracle. The Greeks gradually learned to organise the chaos, by taking Apollo’s advice and thinking back to themselves, to their own true necessities, and letting all the sham necessities go. Thus they again came into possession of themselves, and did not remain long the Epigoni of the whole East, burdened with their inheritance. After that hard fight, they increased and enriched the treasure they had inherited by their obedience to the oracle, and they became the ancestors and models for all the cultured nations of the future.

This is a parable for each one of us: he must organise the chaos in himself by “thinking himself back” to his true needs. He will want all his honesty, all the sturdiness and sincerity in his character to help him to revolt against second-hand thought, second-hand learning, second-hand action. And he will begin then to understand that culture can be something more than a “decoration of life” — a concealment and disfiguring of it, in other words; for all adornment hides what is adorned. And thus the Greek idea, as against the Roman, will be discovered in him, the idea of culture as a new and finer nature, without distinction of inner and outer, without convention or disguise, as a unity of thought and will, life and appearance. He will learn too, from his own experience, that it was by a greater force of moral character that the Greeks were victorious, and that everything which makes for sincerity is a further step towards true culture, however this sincerity may harm the ideals of education that are reverenced at the time, or even have power to shatter a whole system of merely decorative culture.